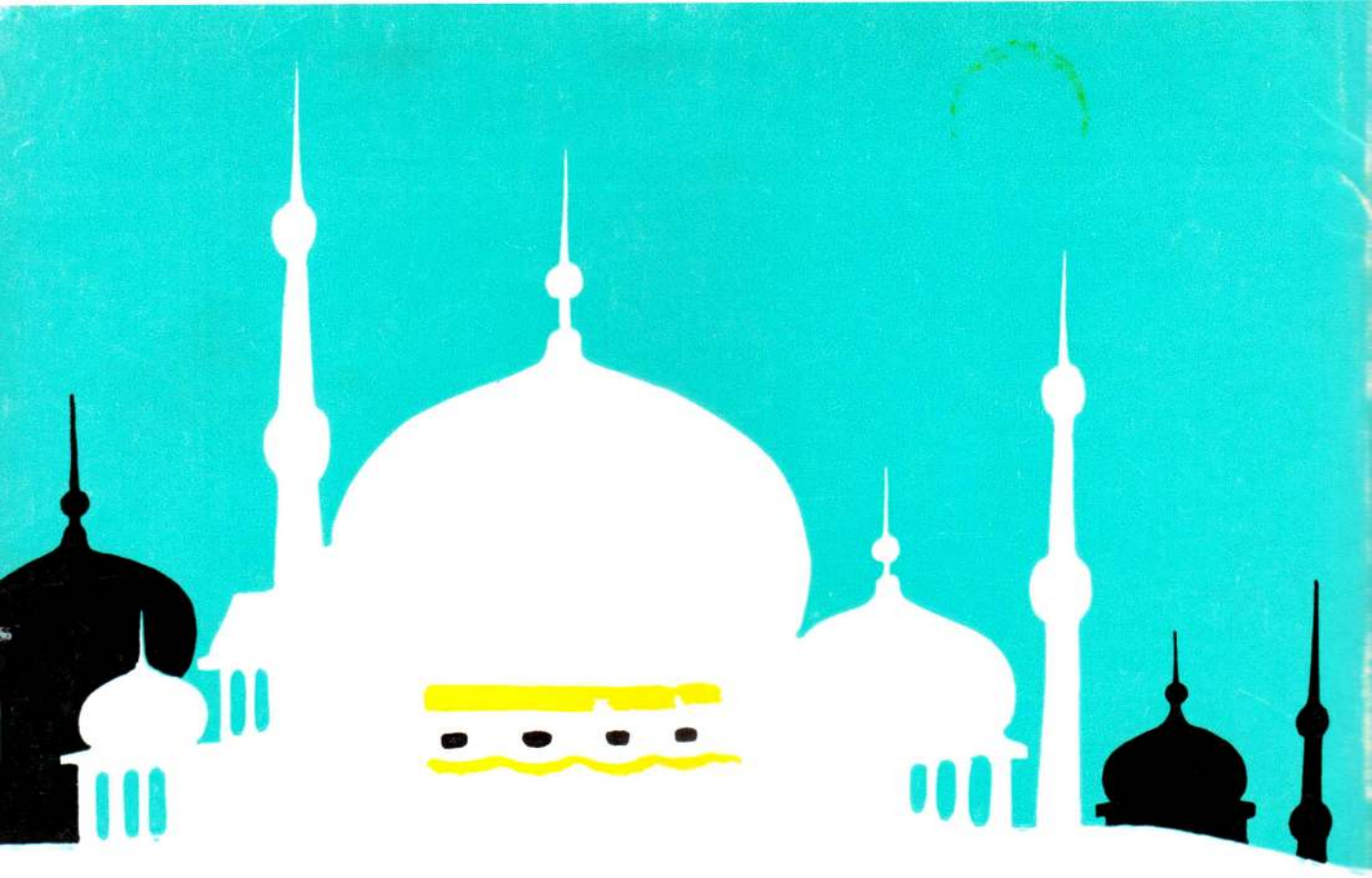
The Gold Plant

and Other Tales of the Effendi



THE EFFENDI, also known sometimes as the Effendi Nasreddin, is a legendary hero in many countries in the East. He is kind and resourceful, just and witty, and above all, full of homour. For centuries he has been loved and admired by the Chinese people both young and old, particularly by the Uygur people in Xinjiang, northwest China.

Tales of the Effendi come from the people and belong to a long tradition of oral folk literature. This book includes five of the many tales of our hero: "The Gold Plant," "The Second Storey," "The Bag of Tricks," "Buying the Shade" and "The Pregnant Pot." These five tales are short, witty and vividly illustrated with cartoon drawings by five well-known Chinese artists.

The Gold Plant and Other Tales of the Effendi

FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS BEIJING

Editor's Note

The Effendi is a folk hero of the Uygur people, one of China's minority nationalities. "Effendi" is not a personal name, but a title of respect, equivalent to "master." This legendary figure is kind and resourceful, just and witty, and for centuries he has been loved and admired by the Chinese people both young and old. Legends of the Effendi have also circulated extensively in many countries in Asia, North Africa and the Middle East, where he is often known by the name of the Effendi Nasreddin.

Tales of the Effendi come from the people and belong to a long tradition of oral folk literature. We see the thoughts and aspirations of the working people reflected in these stories' condemnation of oppression, ignorance and hypocrisy, and affirmation of justice, intelligence and honesty.

This book has selected five short, humorous tales from the numerous stories of the Effendi. The illustrations are done by well-known Chinese artists.

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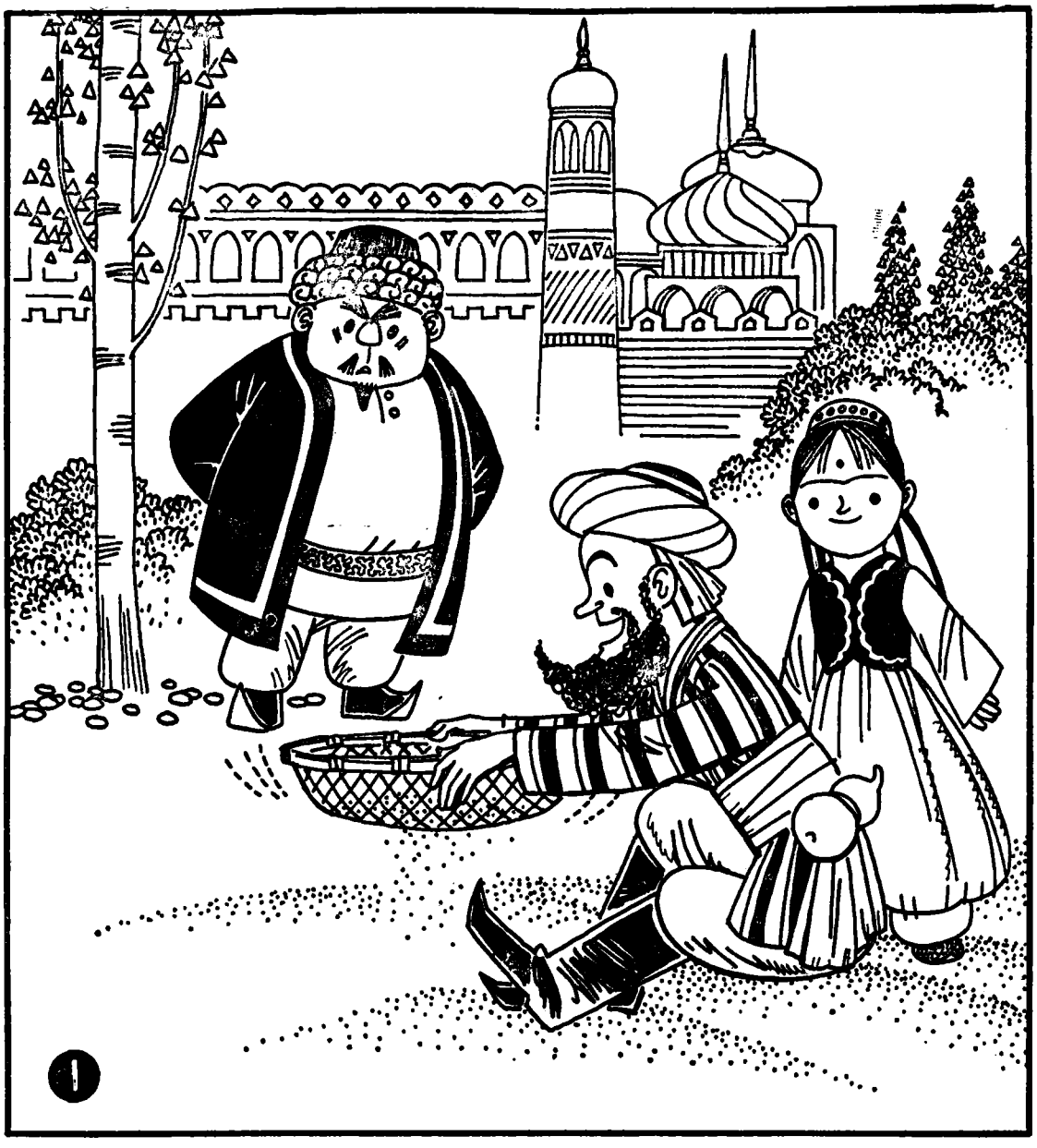
The Gold Plant

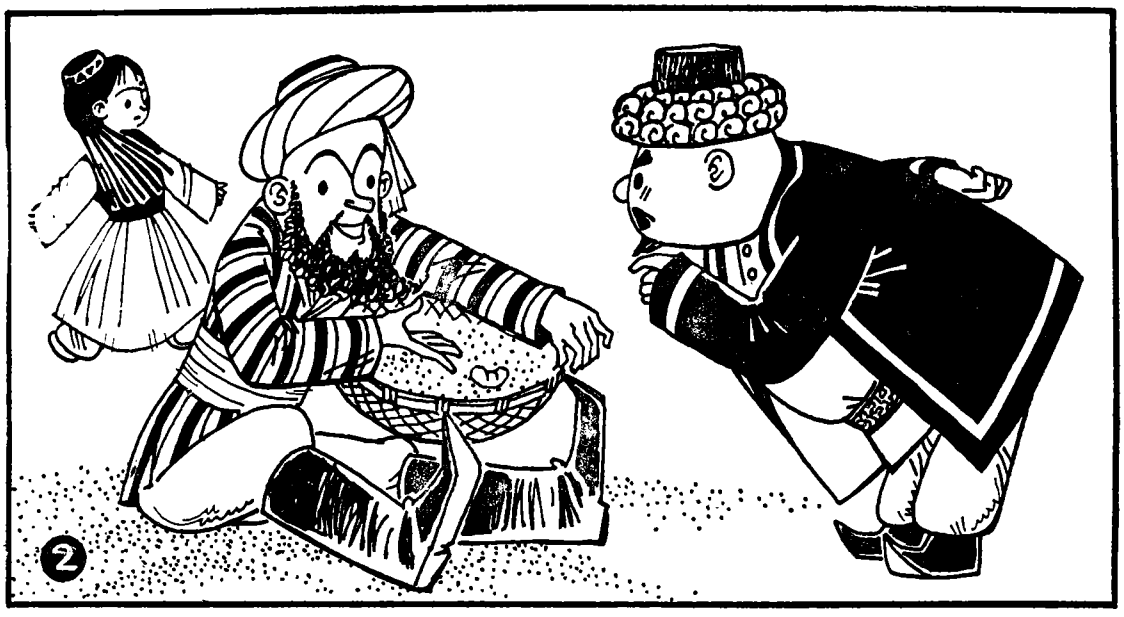
Adapted by Xie Defeng
Illustrated by Sun Yizeng



One day a greedy Bai saw the Effendi sitting on the ground running something through a sieve. He asked in astonishment, "Hey, what the devil are you doing?"

The Effendi answered, "As you can see, I am selecting larger grains of gold. I'll plant them in the fields."

Even more astonished, the Bai asked, "Tell me, my friend, will the gold grow if you plant it?"

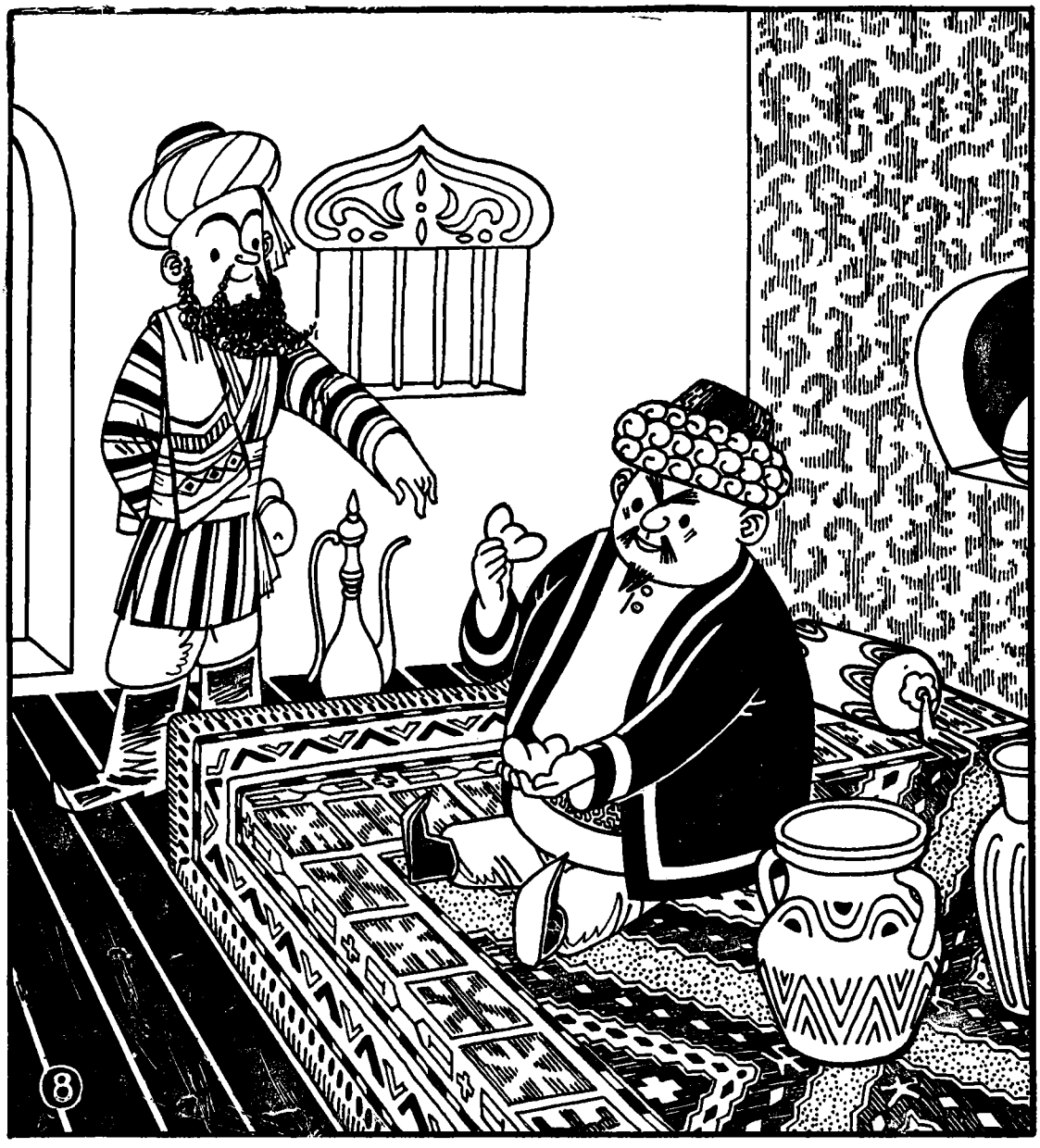


The Effendi replied with a smile, "I am planting one ounce of gold now, I shall get a pound in return by next Sunday. If you don't believe me, come to my house then and see for yourself."

God might bestow on me the chance for great wealth, the Bai thought happily. Then he said, "Oh, my dear friend, I trust you. We should plant it together. When the gold comes up, you only have to give me eighty per cent of the harvest because the land here belongs to me, and you can keep all the rest."

Delighted, the Effendi answered, "I understand. If I harvest one pound, I can get two ounces. All right. I can still double my income."

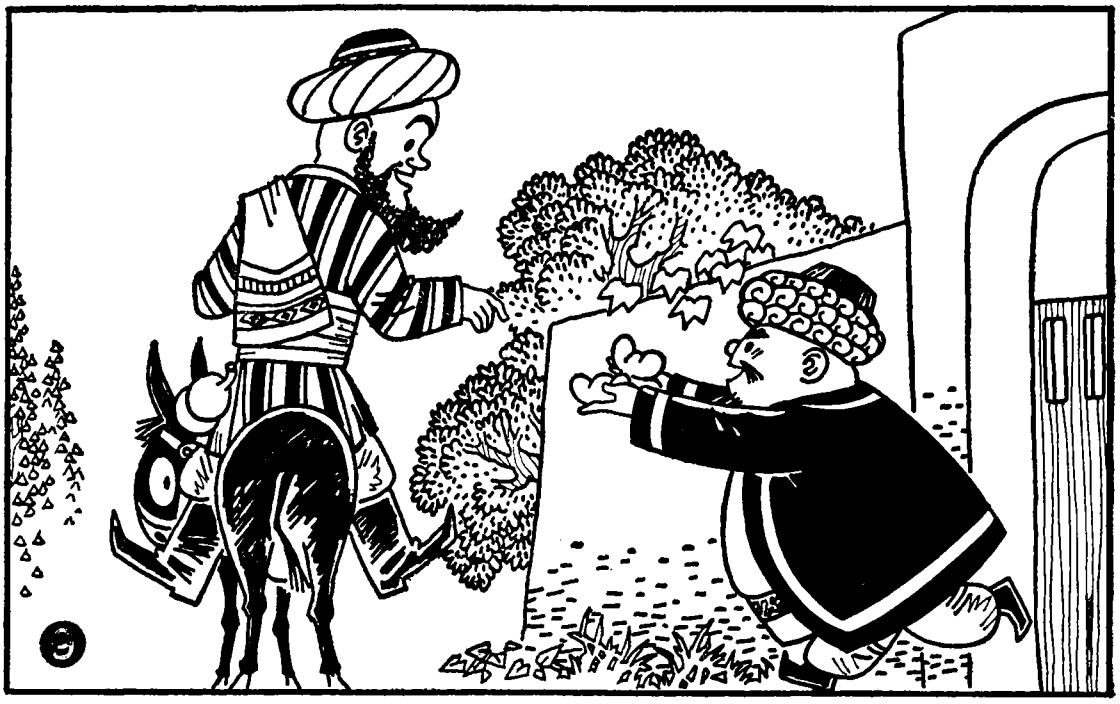
But the Bai worried that a mere verbal statement was no guarantee, so he invited a Cadi to serve as a witness. The Cadi agreed. "You can plant gold wherever you like," he told the Effendi, "but remember, you must send eight ounces of gold to the Bai next Sunday."



Seven days later, the Effendi brought to the Bai eight ounces of gold. The Bai's mouth fell open in astonishment when he saw the glittering metal. He weighed the gold in his hand, examined each piece carefully, and finally decided that they were real gold. He was so overjoyed that he could hardly speak.

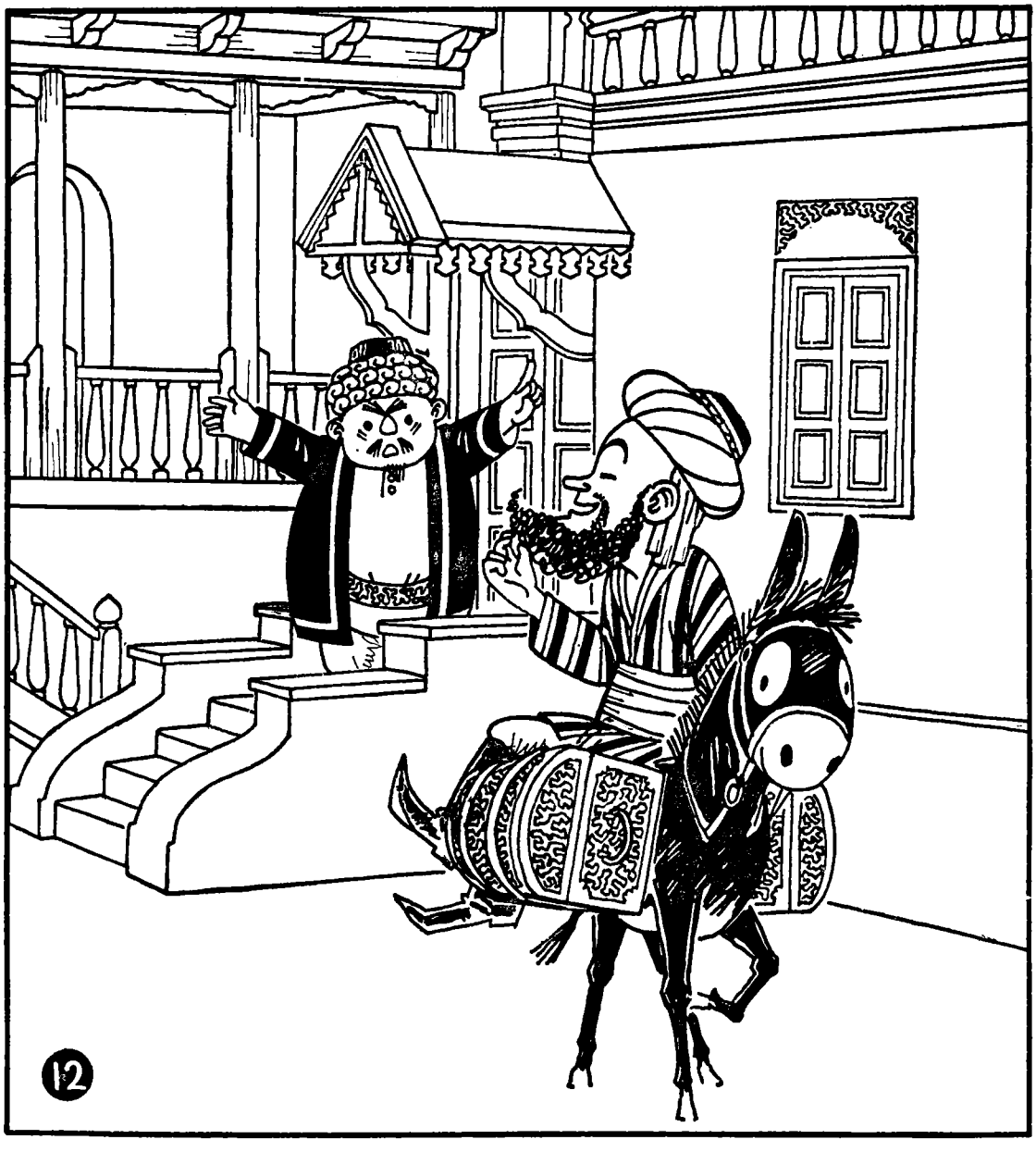
Just as the Effendi was leaving the Bai said, "You are really a talented man! Please sow the eight ounces of mine and the two ounces of yours together this time. You can give me eight pounds next Sunday. Remember?"

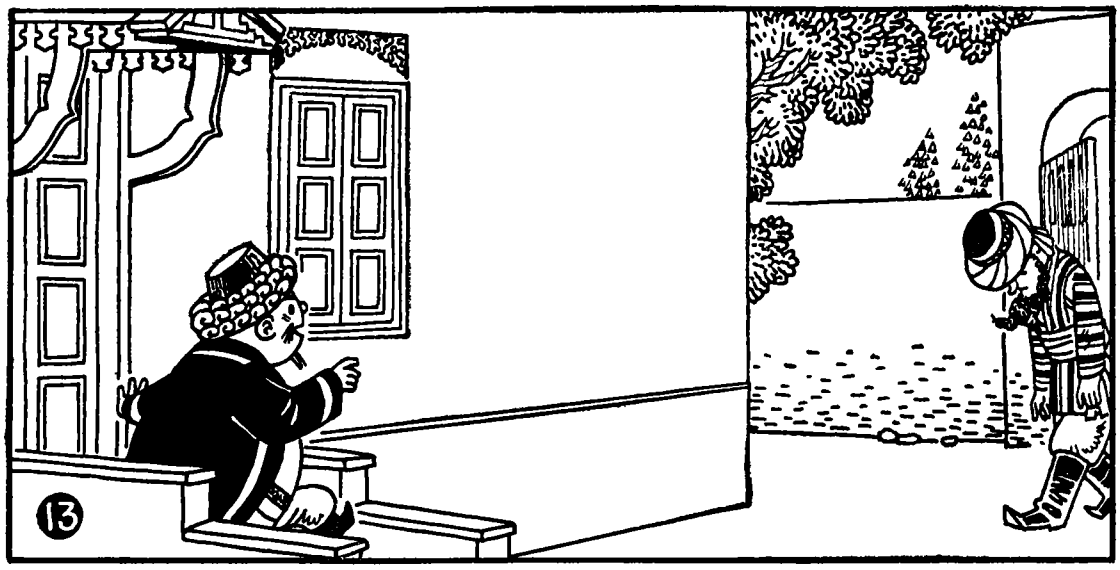
"Yes, my respected Bai. I'll give you exactly the amount you want!"



Seven days later, the Bai received eight pounds of gold. "Why don't you plant more?" the Bai asked the Effendi. "Where can I get the gold to plant?" asked the Effendi.

Immediately the Bai ordered his men to bring out two chests of gold and gave them to the Effendi. He told the Effendi time and again, "You must remember, this time it is not two ounces or two pounds but two chests. Next Sunday you must bring me sixteen chests of gold, not one ounce less!"





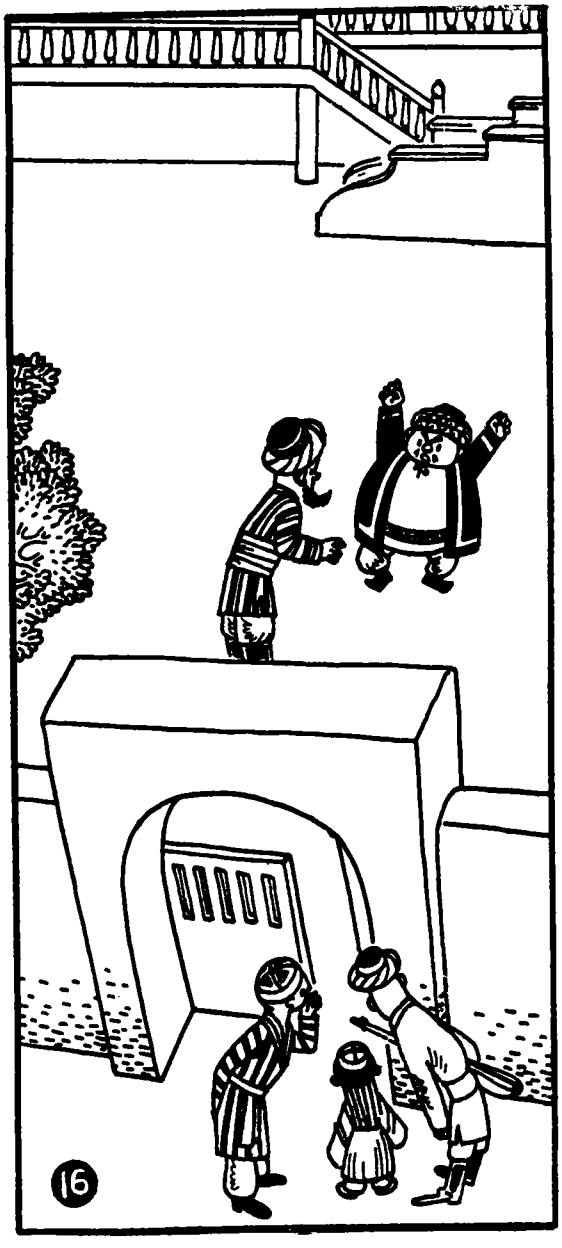
Seven days later, the Effendi went to the Bai with a sad look.

With a big smile, the Bai went to greet the Effendi, "Oh, my dear friend, the donkey cart and the loadful of gold must be standing outside in the courtyard."

"My respected Bai, what terrible bad luck!" The Effendi began to weep. "As you may have noticed, it hasn't rained for days, so the gold plants dried up! I have lost everything. Not only the harvest but also what I have planted!"

Foaming with rage, the Bai was furious with the Effendi and shouted, "Nonsense! Liar! Gold plants dried up!" "Please ask your Cadi to come here if you don't believe me!" the Effendi said calmly.

The Bai sent for the Cadi right away. The Cadi came. "I am the fairest Cadi in the world," he told them. "If anyone tells a lie, he will be punished without mercy."



"Very good," said the Effendi. "Please ask the Bai why he believed that the eight pounds of gold he had received was produced from the field if he doesn't believe that gold plants can dry up."

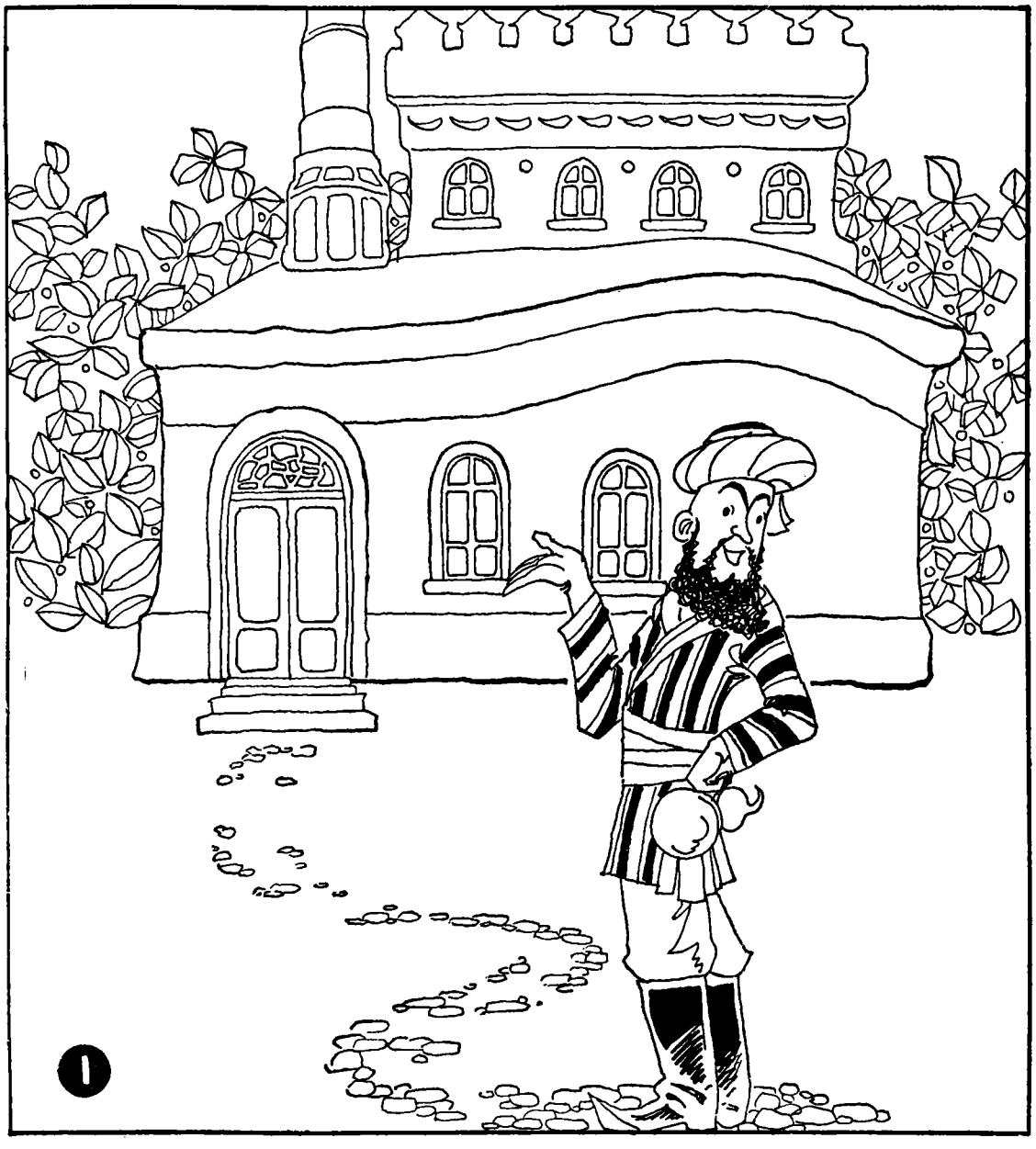
"Mm—" the Bai could say nothing.

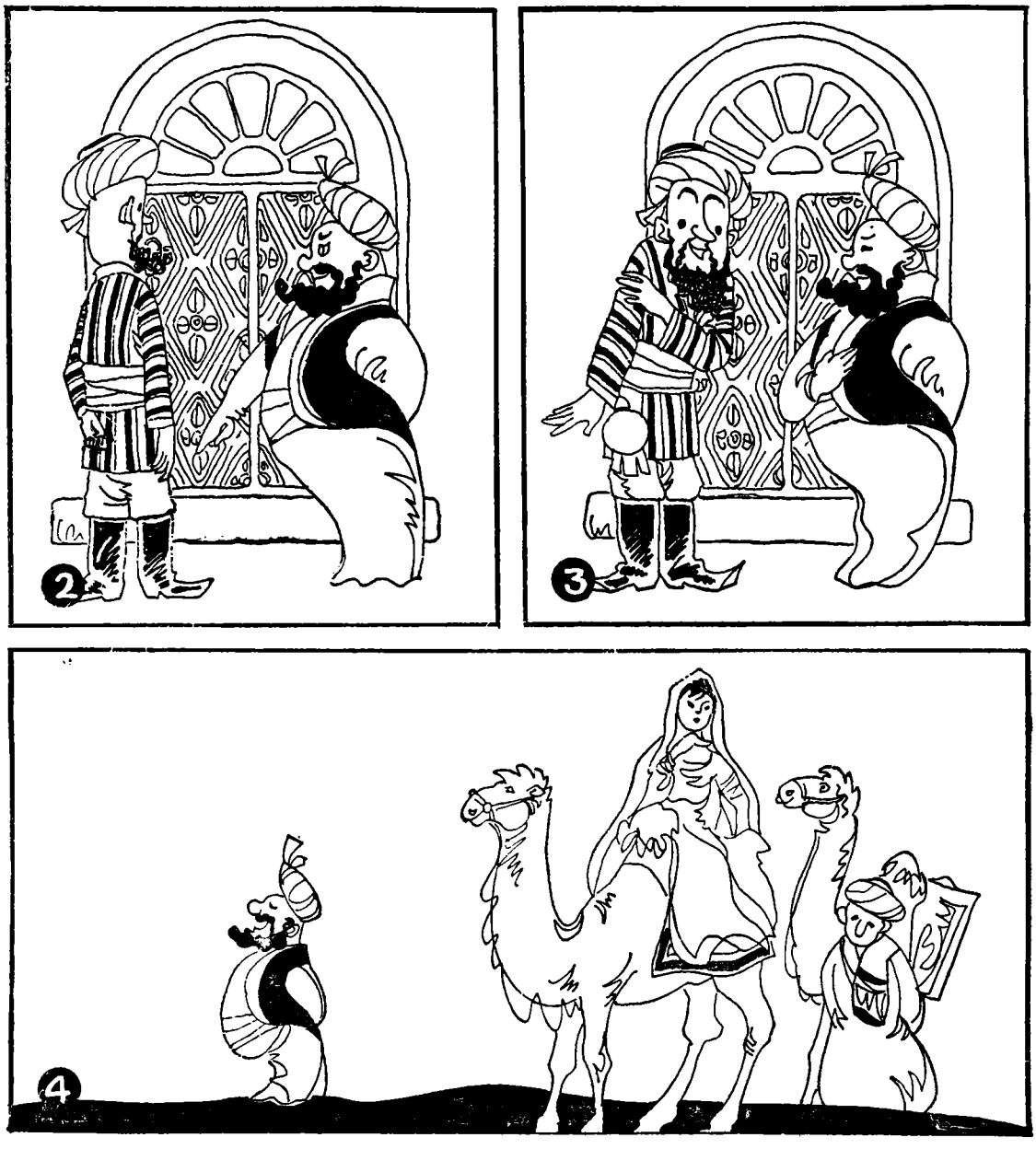
Then the Effendi returned the gold to those from whom he had borrowed it, but with ten times the interest. Before they had time to thank him, the Effendi again mounted his little donkey and went on his way.

The Second Storey

Adapted by Ying Zhou
Illustrated by Sun Kaili

Once the Effendi borrowed one hundred gold coins from a rich lord. With the money, he and his family built a two-storey house.





The lord admired the new house. He asked the Effendi to give him the second floor as payment for the debt, otherwise he would demand the money back immediately.

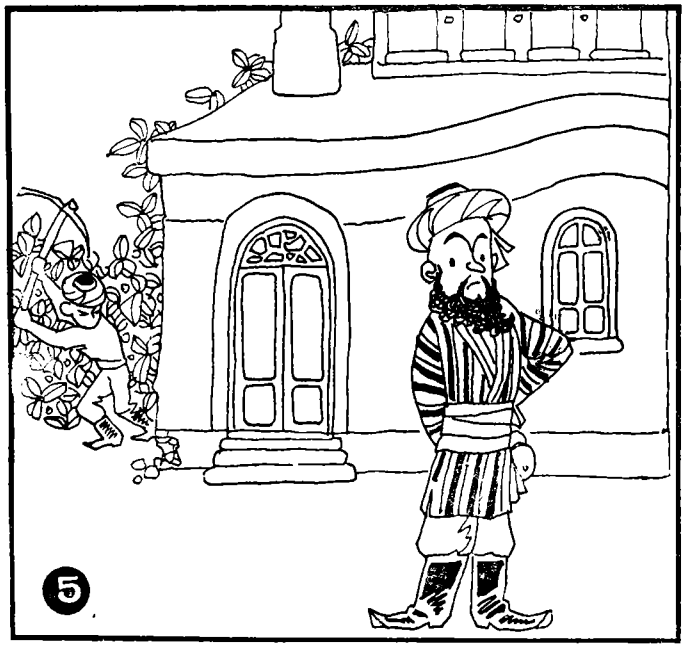
The Effendi saw through the lord's plot, but he readily agreed.

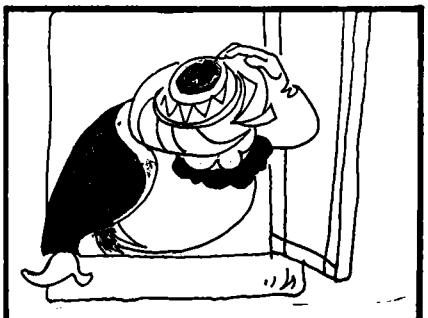
Even before the Effendi, the lord and his family had moved into the second-floor rooms of the new house.

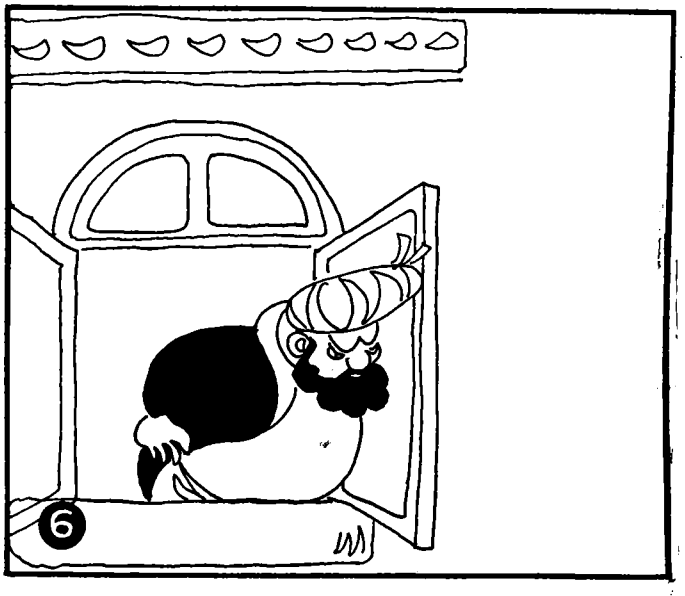
A few days later, the Effendi hired a man to tear down the wall.

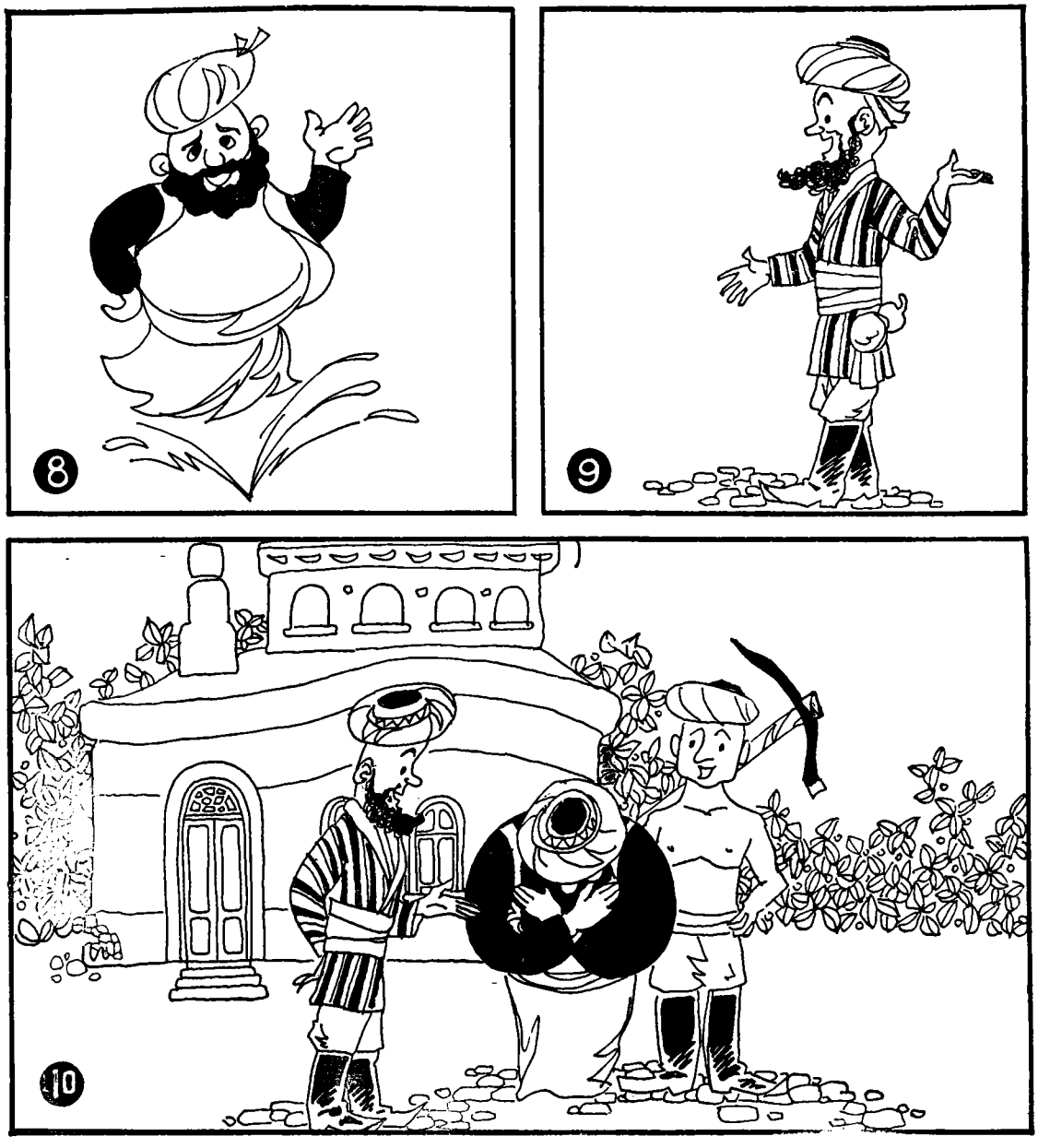
The lord heard the wrecking sound downstairs. He was terrified as he looked out of his window. "What do you think you are doing there? Are you crazy?" he yelled at the Effendi.

"Don't panic, stay where you are! This has nothing to do with you," the Effendi said and went on working.









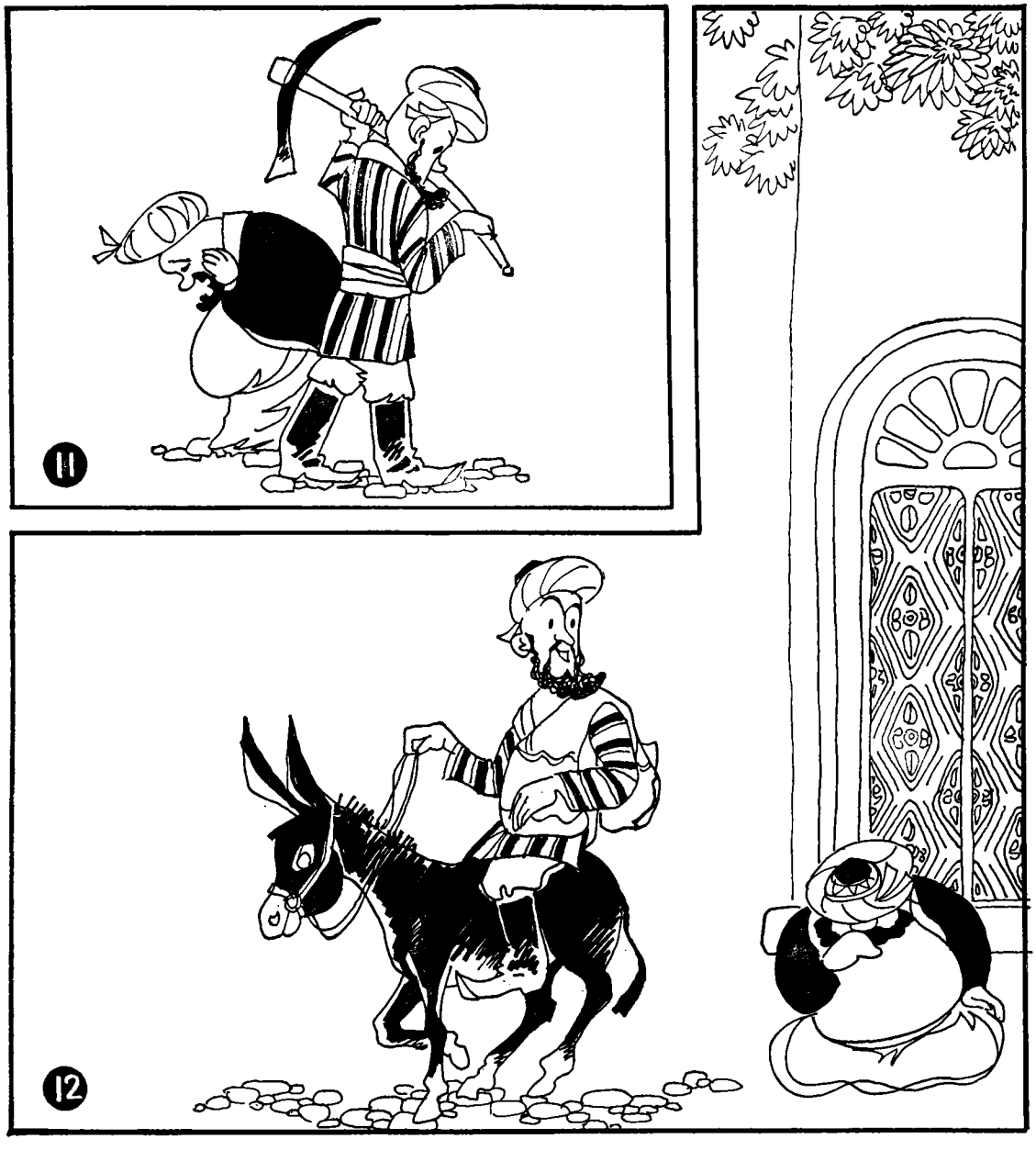
The lord rushed down the stairs, hopping mad. "What do you mean by 'nothing to do with me'?" he shouted. "I'm living on the second floor. If the house falls down, what will happen to me?"

"How can anything happen to you?" retorted the Effendi. "We're only tearing down the first floor, not the second! Just keep an eye on your second floor. Don't let it fall on our heads while we're working!" And he resumed working as before.

At his wits' end, the lord begged the Effendi to listen to him. "My dear friend, in the name of our friendship, I beg you. Please sell me the first floor."

"Do you want to buy?" the Effendi asked coldly. "Give me two hundred gold coins. Not one coin less!" "What?" the lord was speechless. The Effendi turned and went on working.

"All right, all right!" said the lord. He hurried back upstairs to get the money and handed it over to the Effendi.



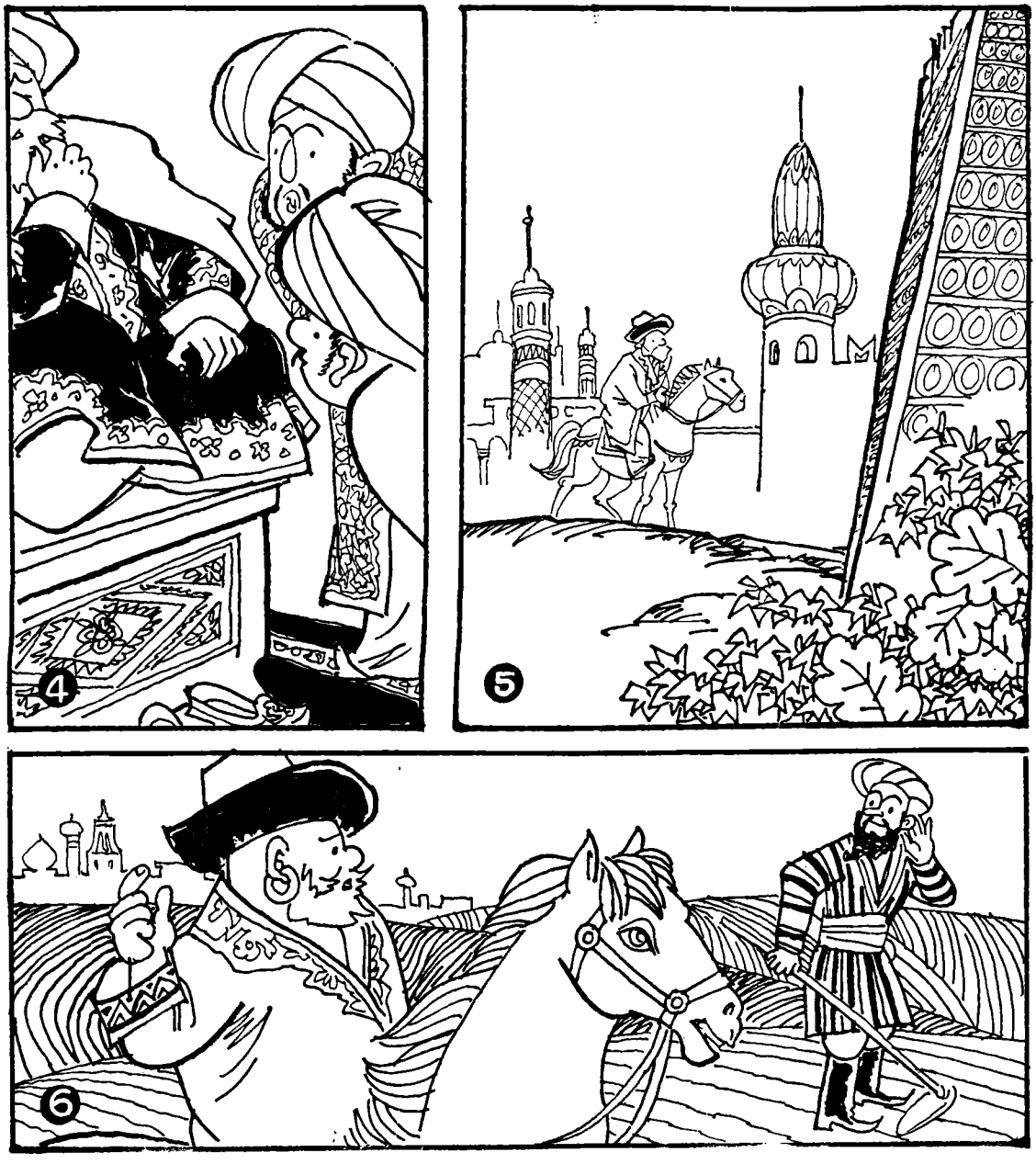
The Bag of Tricks

Adapted by Zhang Fenghe
Illustrated by Liu Dezhang

There once was a padishah who was not convinced of the Effendi's cleverness. He said to his ministers, "I have been told that not very far from here lives a man named the Effendi who is able to trick even his padishah. Can that be true?"

"Yes," his ministers replied. "We have heard that the Effendi is very intelligent. Where cunning is concerned, no one is his match!"

"Humph!" said the padishah. "I can't believe that! How can an ordinary man be cleverer than a padishah?"



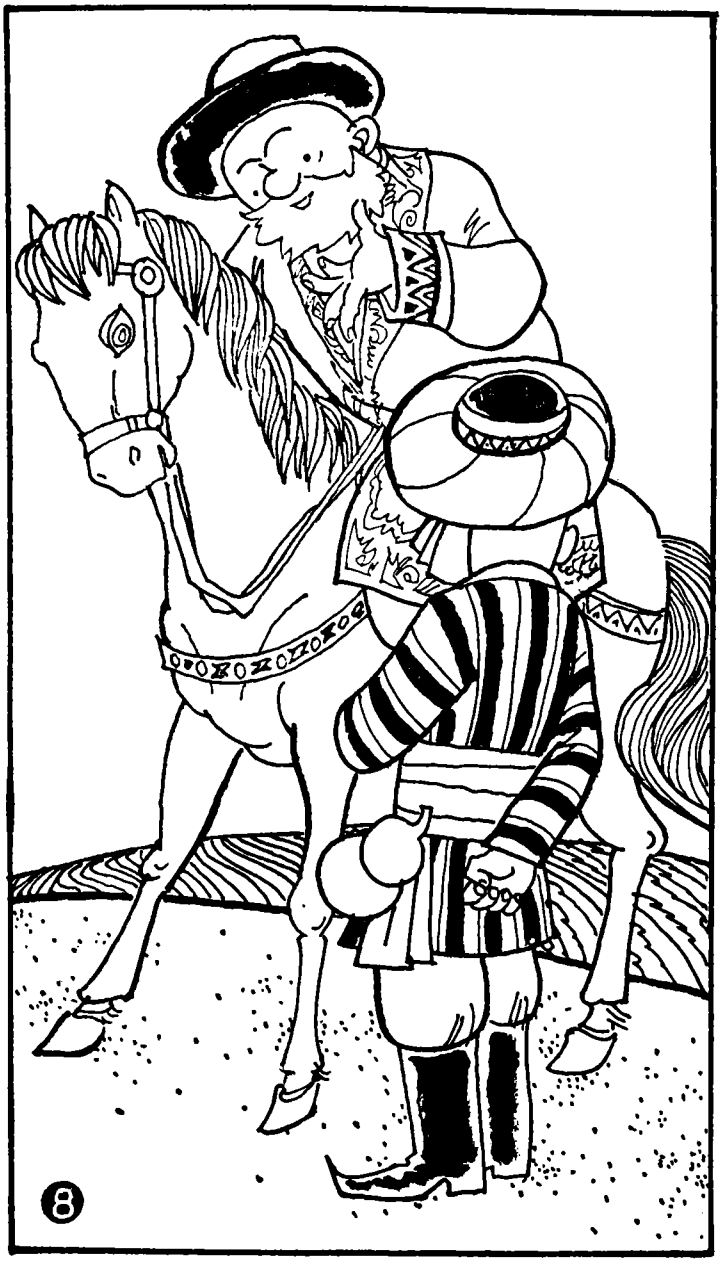
"Oh no," the ministers agreed, knowing the padishah's conceit. "We don't quite believe that either."

The padishah decided to go to see the Effendi and play a trick on him. He travelled for several days and finally arrived at the Effendi's country.

The padishah saw a man working in the fields and asked, "It is said that here in your country there is a very clever man called the Effendi. Can you go and tell him to come to see me? I would like to know just how justified his fame is."

The man in the fields happened to be the Effendi himself. He guessed immediately that the motives of this strange visitor were not good. "I am the Effendi. What can I do for you?"

"Ah, so you are the Effendi!" said the padishah with a scornful smile. "I have heard that you are very cunning. Can you fool me? No, you can't. Never. No one has ever been able to fool me."

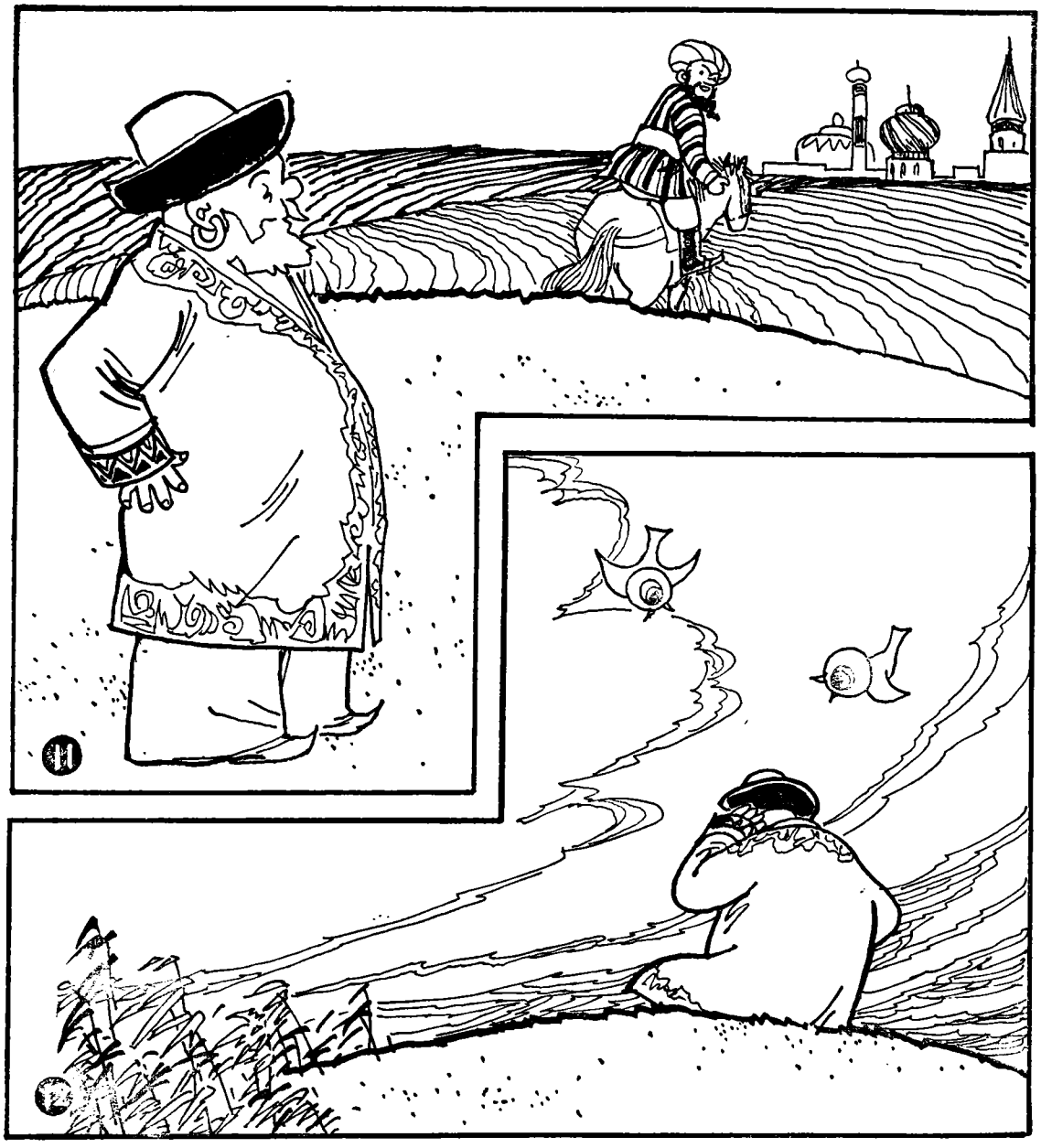


"I would like to have a try then," said the Effendi. "But first you must wait here for a moment. I will go home and get my trick bag. If you are not afraid of my bag, let me ride on your horse so I can return sooner."

"Even if you had ten trick bags, I wouldn't be afraid," said the padishah, handing the reins to the Effendi. "Come back at once so I can test your talent."

The Effendi climbed into the saddle and galloped off like the wind.

The padishah waited, waited until the sun was set behind the mountain. The Effendi did not return. When he finally realized that he had been tricked, the padishah waited until it was dark and then went back home, thoroughly embarrassed.

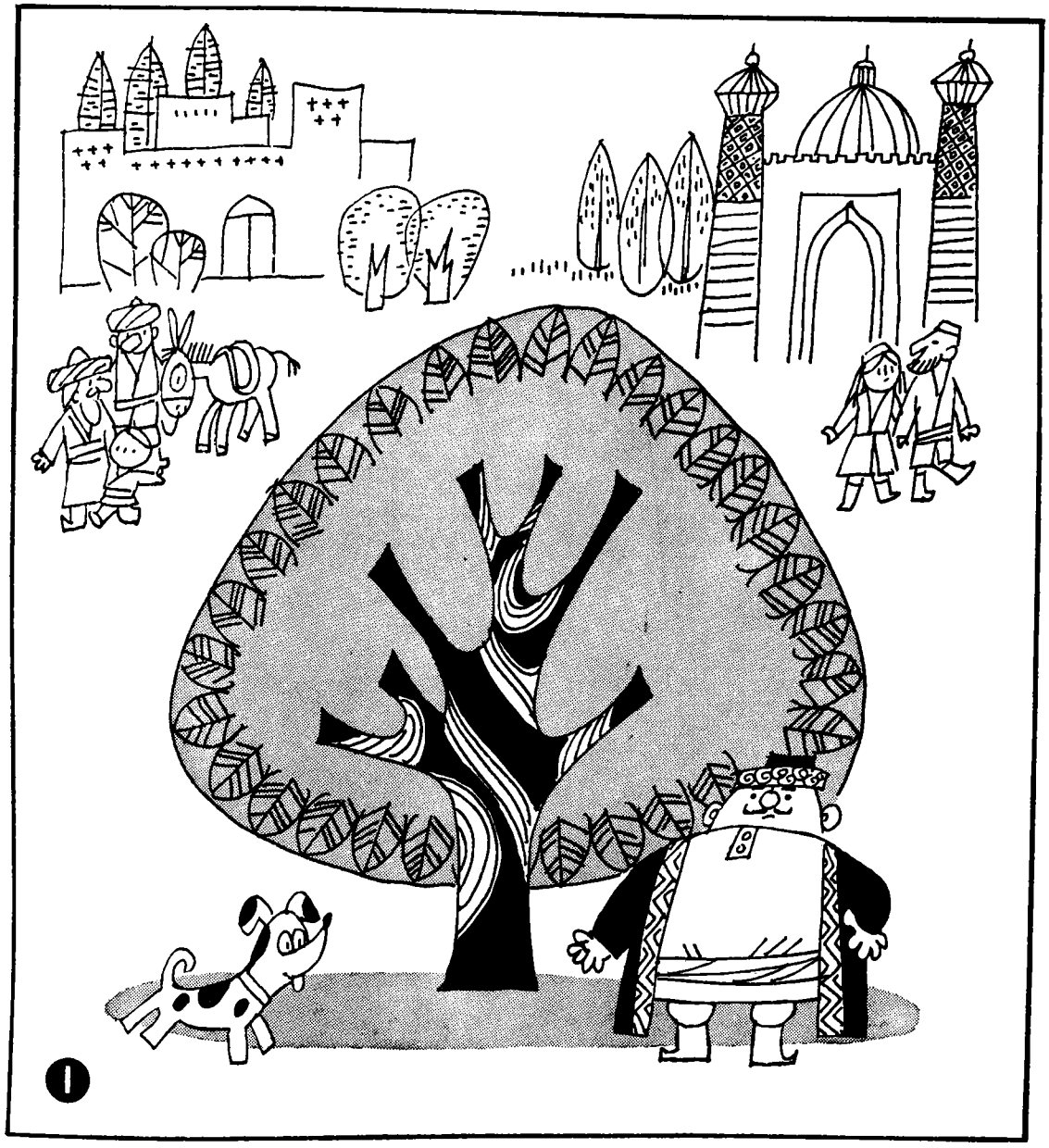


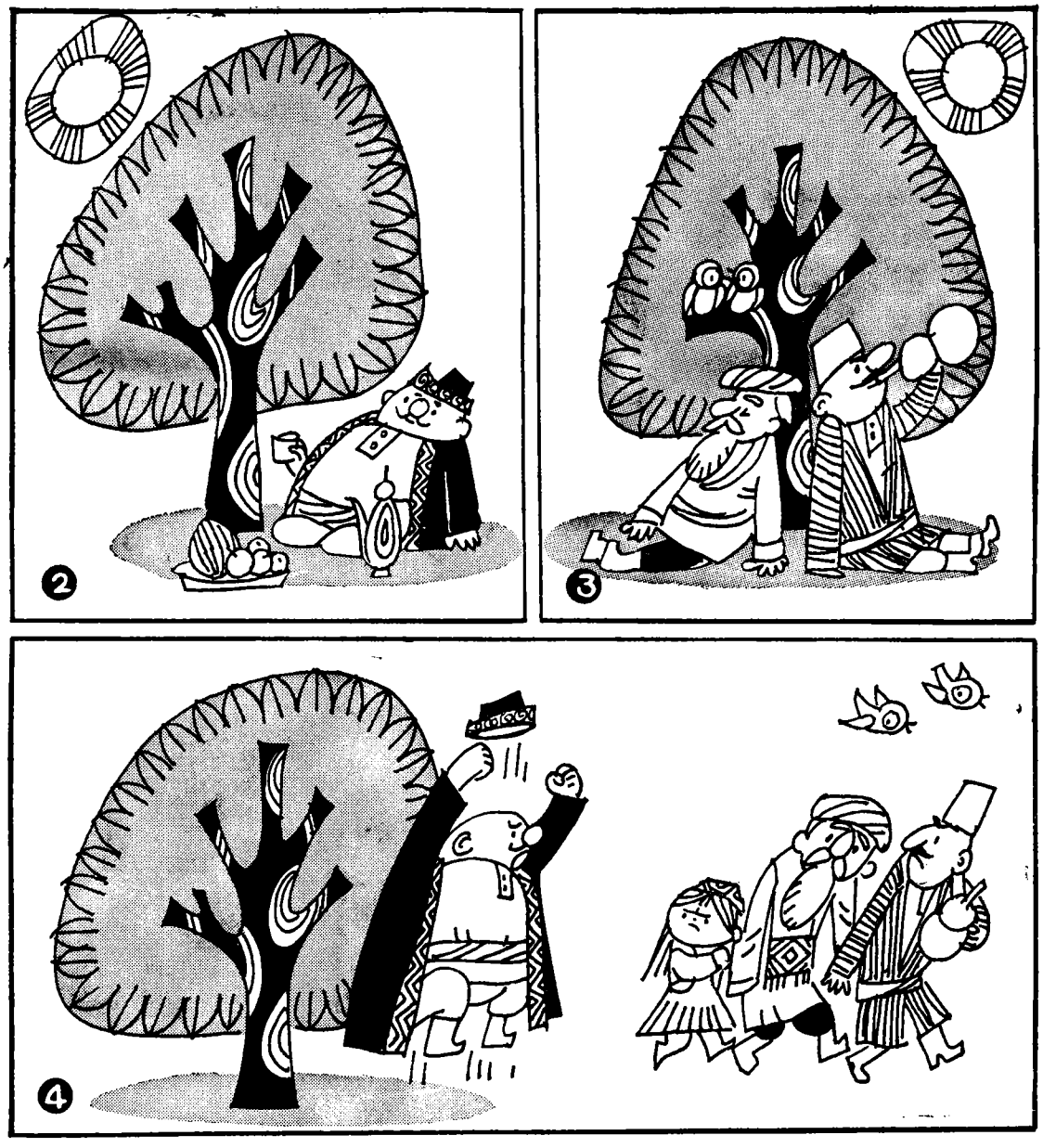
Buying the Shade

Adapted by Lin Chuanxin
Illustrated by Miao Yintang

Once upon a time in a beautiful village lived a greedy Bai.

In front of his house was a big tree, which gave a nice shade. The shade moved with the sun and moon, over the road in the morning, to the courtyard in the afternoon and the whole roof in the evening.





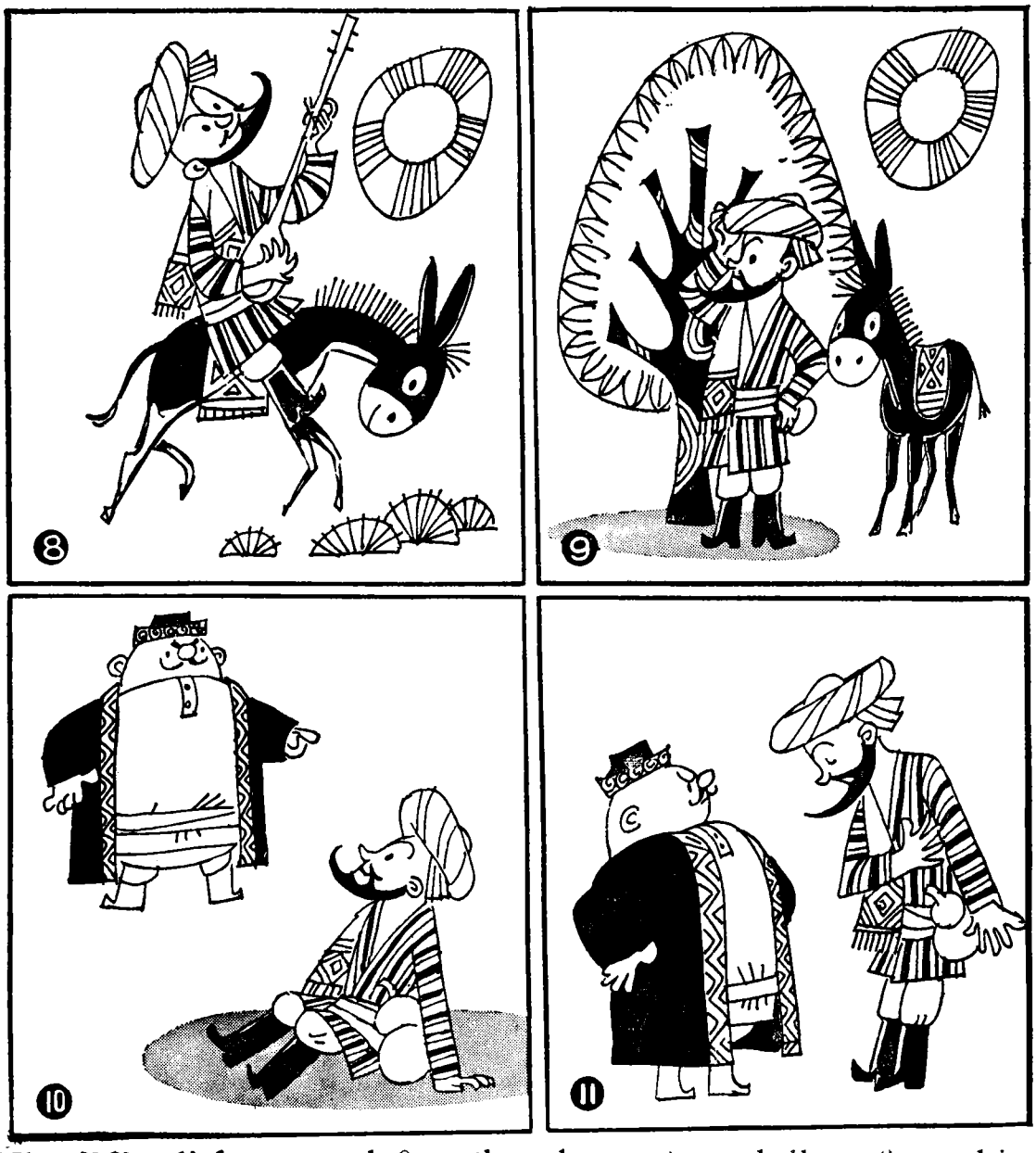
The villagers and passersby liked to stop there to take a rest and enjoy the cool air under the shade of the tree.

But every time the stingy Bai would yell at the people, "Go back to your own shade!" He wouldn't stop until everyone was gone.

The villagers were very angry but did not know what to do. They decided to ask the Effendi for help.

The Effendi was trying to think of a way to give vent to the villagers' anger.

One day the Effendi went to the fields and talked to some poor friends. Together they worked out a plan to teach the stingy Bai a lesson.



The Effendi borrowed four hundred silver dollars from his poor friends and rode on his donkey to the Bai's house. He sang as he rode happily along.

The Effendi was perspiring profusely when he came to the shade of the tree.

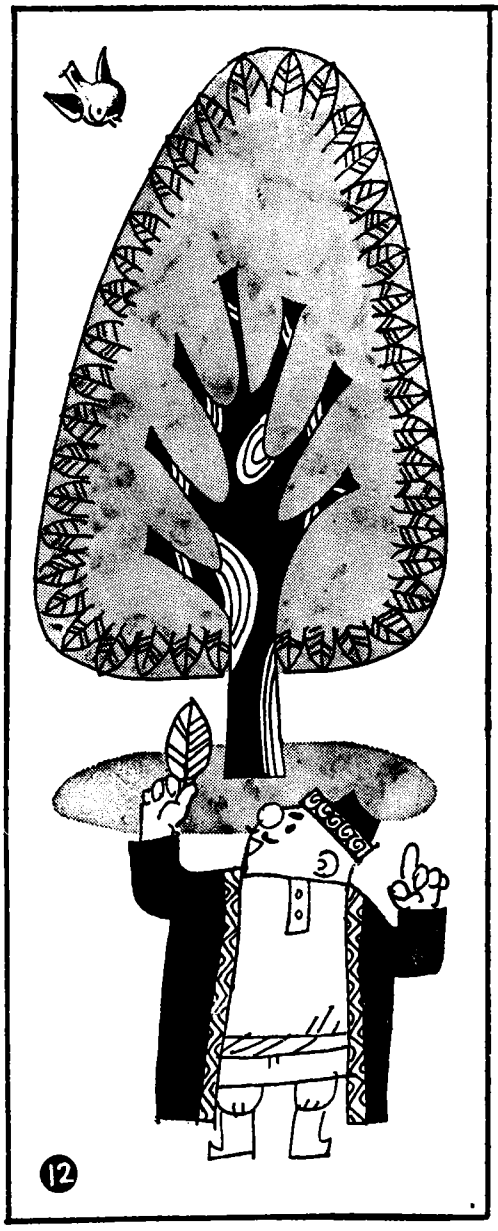
Just as the Effendi was to have a rest on the ground the Bai cried out, "Why are you stopping here? Go on your way!"

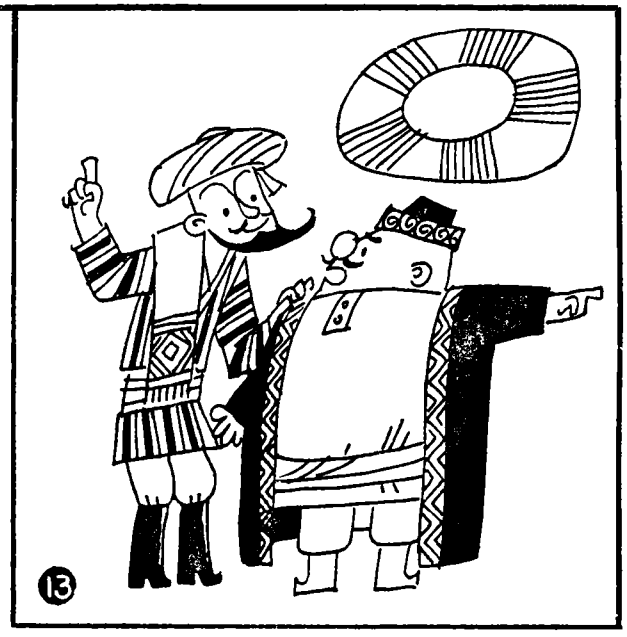
The Effendi replied very politely, "My dear Bai, the road belongs to everybody. Why can't I have a rest here?"

"The road is yours but the shade is mine," the Bai yelled. "Only those who have money are allowed to sit here. Each leaf is worth as much as one silver dollar."

"You say that only people with money can sit here. Do you mean that the shade is for sale?" the Effendi questioned closely. The Bai cast a sidelong glance at him and then asked, "Can a poor fellow like you afford to buy my shade? Stop boasting and be on your way!"

"We poor people never boast. How much is your shade?" asked the Effendi. Surprised at the traveller's unexpected





wealth, the Bai said that he would sell the shade for four hundred silver dollars.

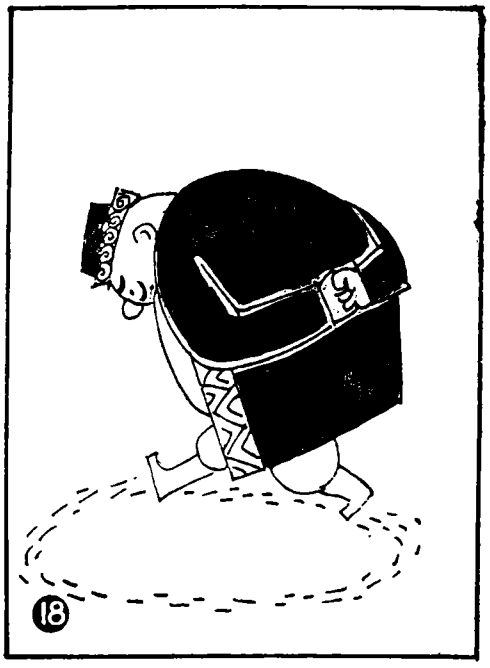
Both sides invited a Cadi and signed a contract. The shade would belong to the Effendi until the tree withered and died. And neither side was allowed to go back on his word. The Effendi handed four hundred silver dollars to the Bai before the witnesses.

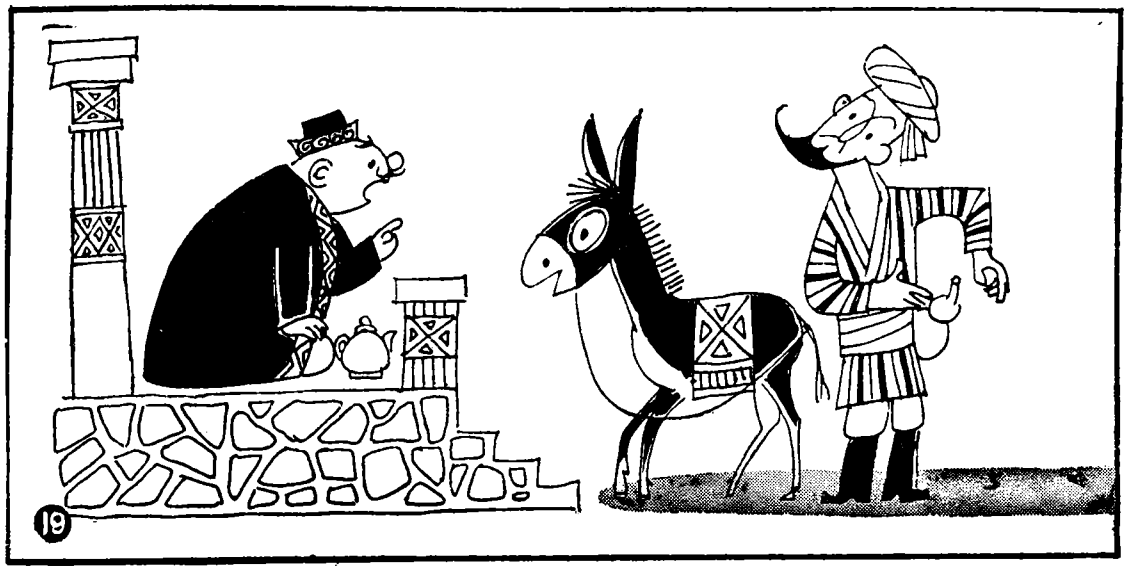
After that, the villagers often gathered in the shade, playing musical instruments, singing songs and having a jolly time.

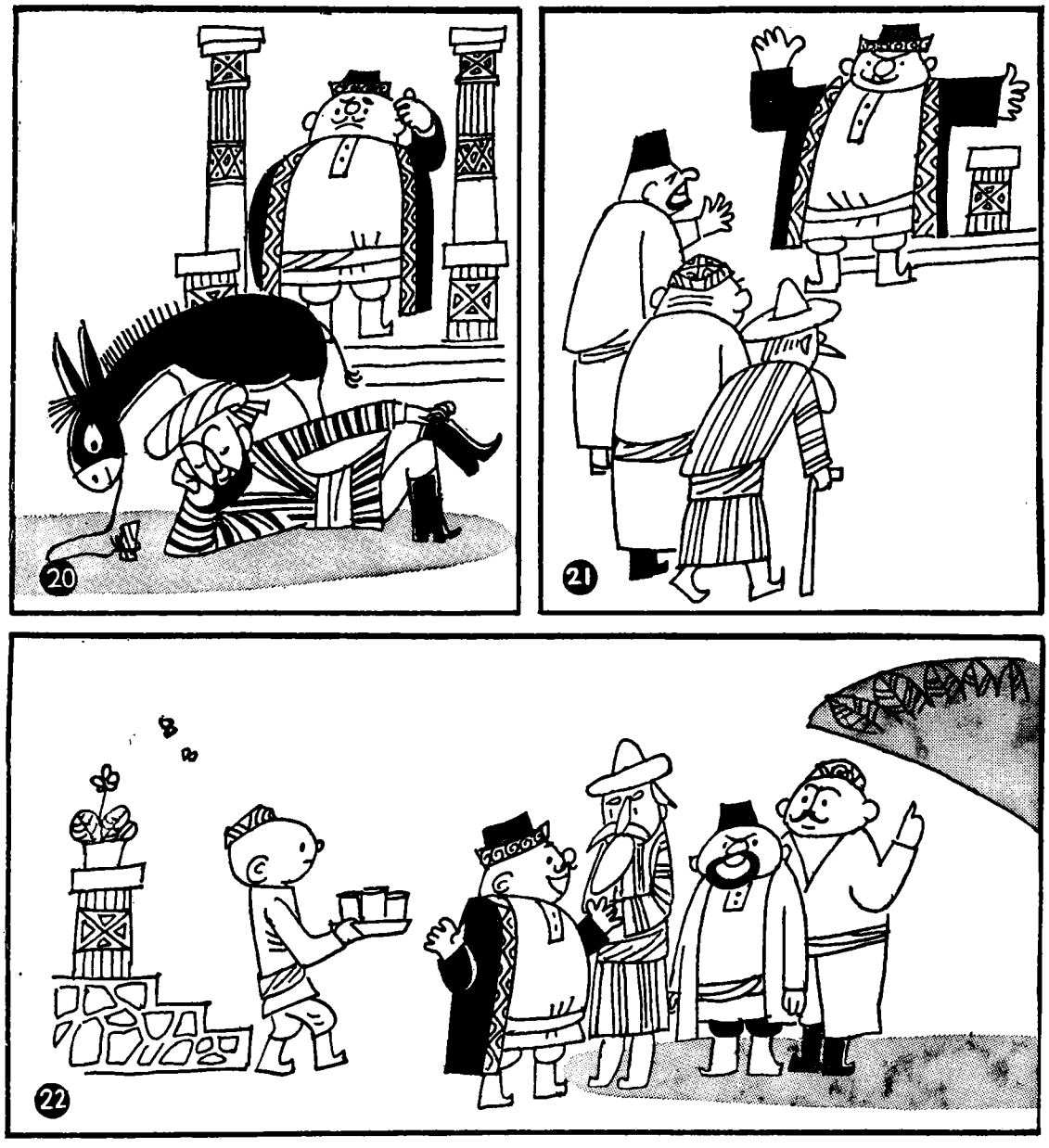
"What on earth are you doing here?" the Bai cried out. "My dear Bai, you have already sold the shade to us, haven't you? We are in our own shade," the Effendi replied with a smile.

The Bai could do nothing but return to his own house and walk about in his courtyard.

One day the Bai was taking a rest on his balcony when the Effendi came in on his donkey. The Bai was furious and started to chase him out. "I am sorry," the Effendi answered calmly. "I just followed the shade in."







After tying his donkey to a post, the Effendi lay down and rested. The Bai stood aside and was unable to do anything about it.

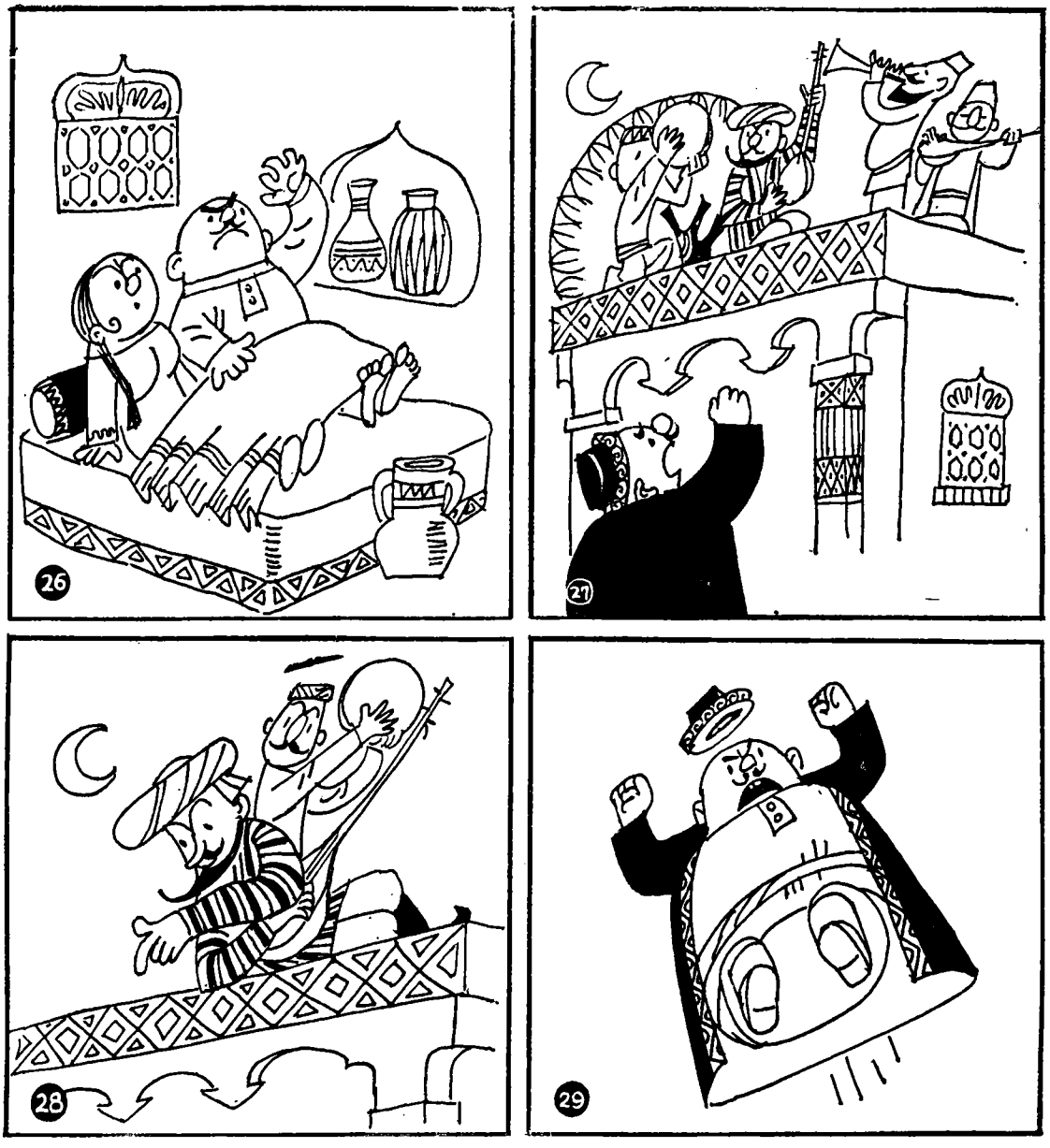
It happened to be the market day, and the Bai invited a few friends home.

Seeing a big tree outside in the yard, the guests went over to the shade.

But just as they were about to sit down, the Effendi came in with a group of his friends.

The Effendi told the Bai's guests, "We have bought the shade for four hundred silver dollars. You're not allowed to occupy the shade." Speechless, the guests left the Bai and went to their own homes.

After that, the selling of the shade became big news in the village. The villagers composed a satirical ballad, which the Effendi put on a piece of paper posted on the Bai's front door.



One night the Bai was woken up from his dream by the barking of dogs.

He went out and saw the Effendi and some other people sitting on the roof, plucking, singing, chatting and playing happily.

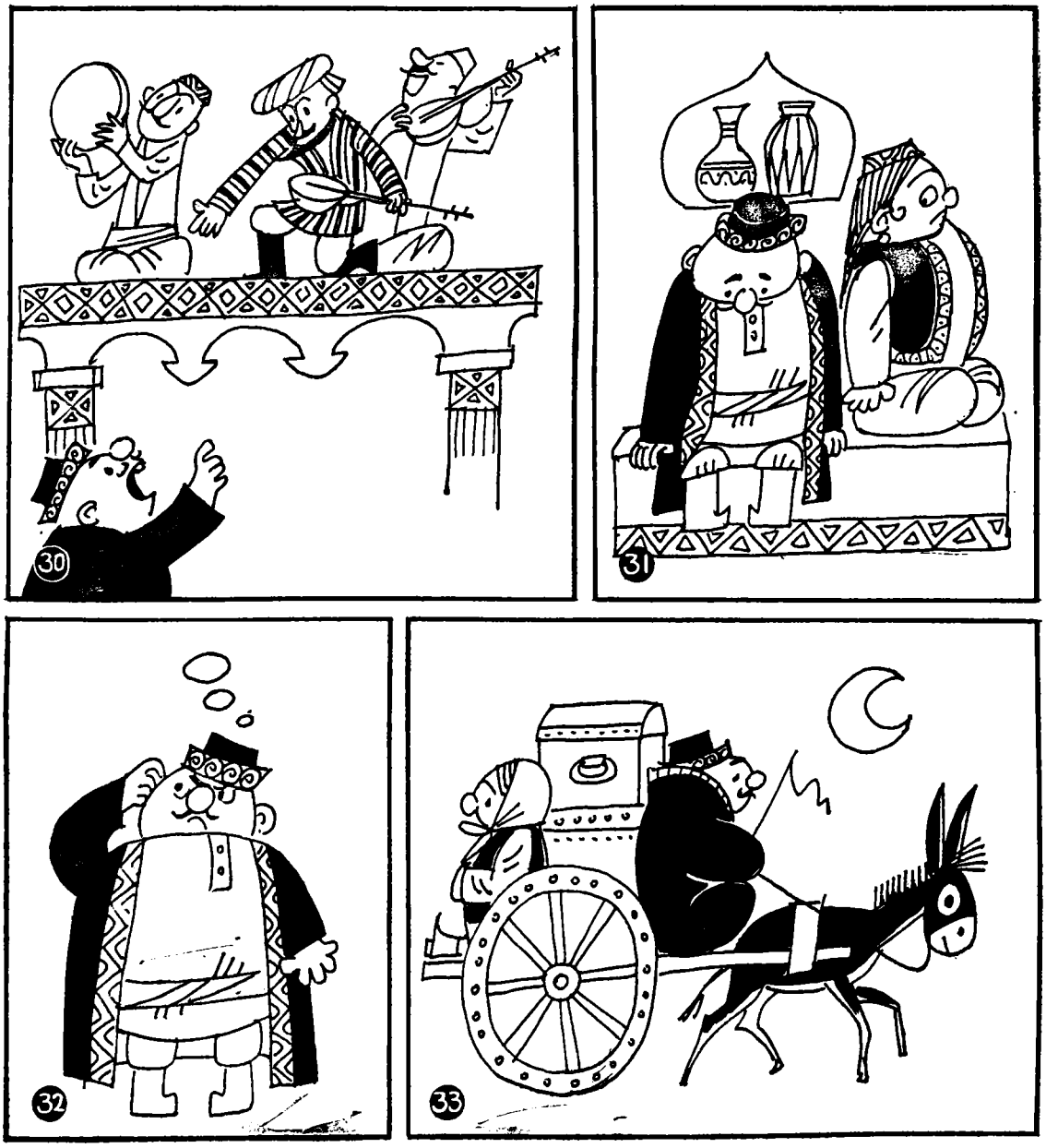
"Excuse us," the Effendi said to the Bai. "We are playing in the shade we've bought. There is no stranger here, so you can rest at ease."

The Bai was trembling with anger and shouted, "I didn't sell the shade of moon to you!"

"My dear Bai, it didn't say on the contract what time and what place the shade was. You'd better go back and study the terms carefully!" And so saying, the Effendi and his friends plucked and sang again.

The Bai wanted to make another plan to deal with the Effendi, but was so nagged by his wife and children that he could hardly think of anything.

The more he thought about it, the more frightened he became. The next morning he and his family moved to a far away place.



The Bai knew clearly that his troubles had just begun. Following the regular appearances of the sun and the moon, the shade would move from the road outside to inside his courtyard and the top of his house, and there would be no end to this trouble.

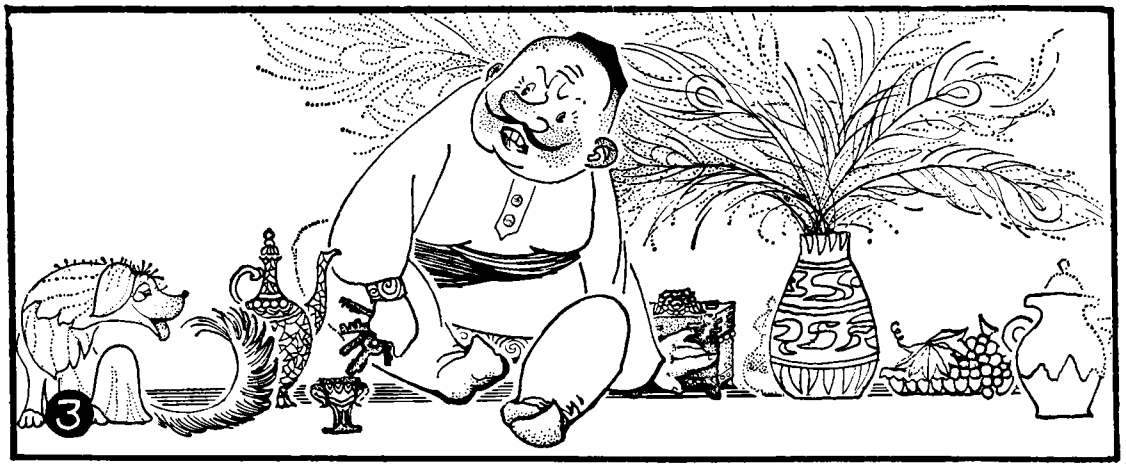
The clever Effendi had certainly taught the Bai a lesson. After that the villagers became the owners of the shade.

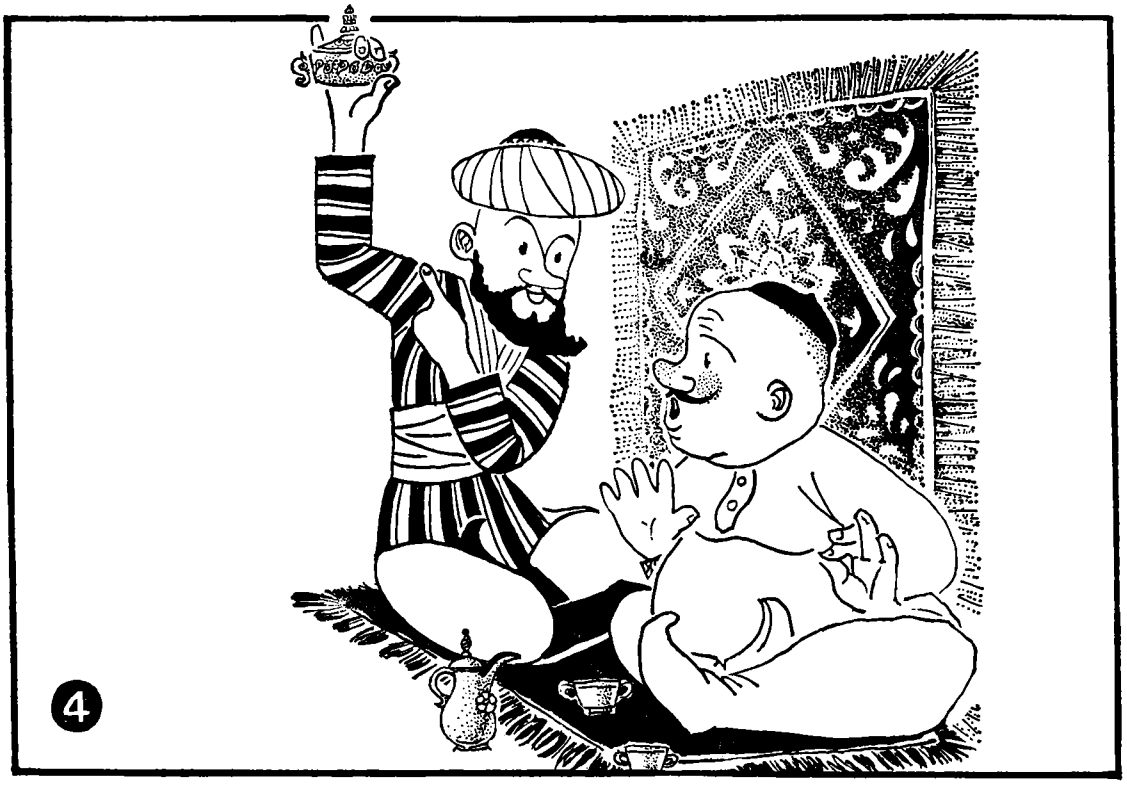
The Pregnant Pot

Adapted by Lin Chuanxin
Illustrated by Jiang Daiming

Once the Effendi borrowed a pot from a great lord. The lord asked him to pay rent by the day.

A few days later, the Effendi came to the lord's house and announced happily, "Congratulations! Your pot has given birth to a son."





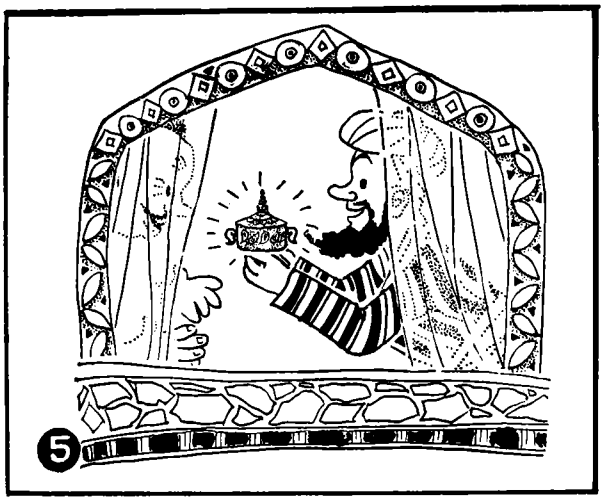
"Nonsense! How can a pot be pregnant?" the lord asked.

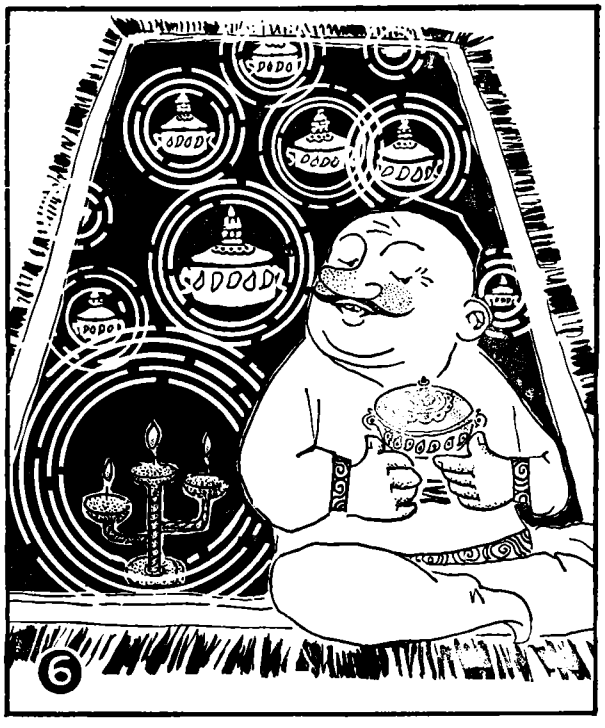
"Look here, if you don't believe me," said the Effendi, who then took out a small pot from his pocket.

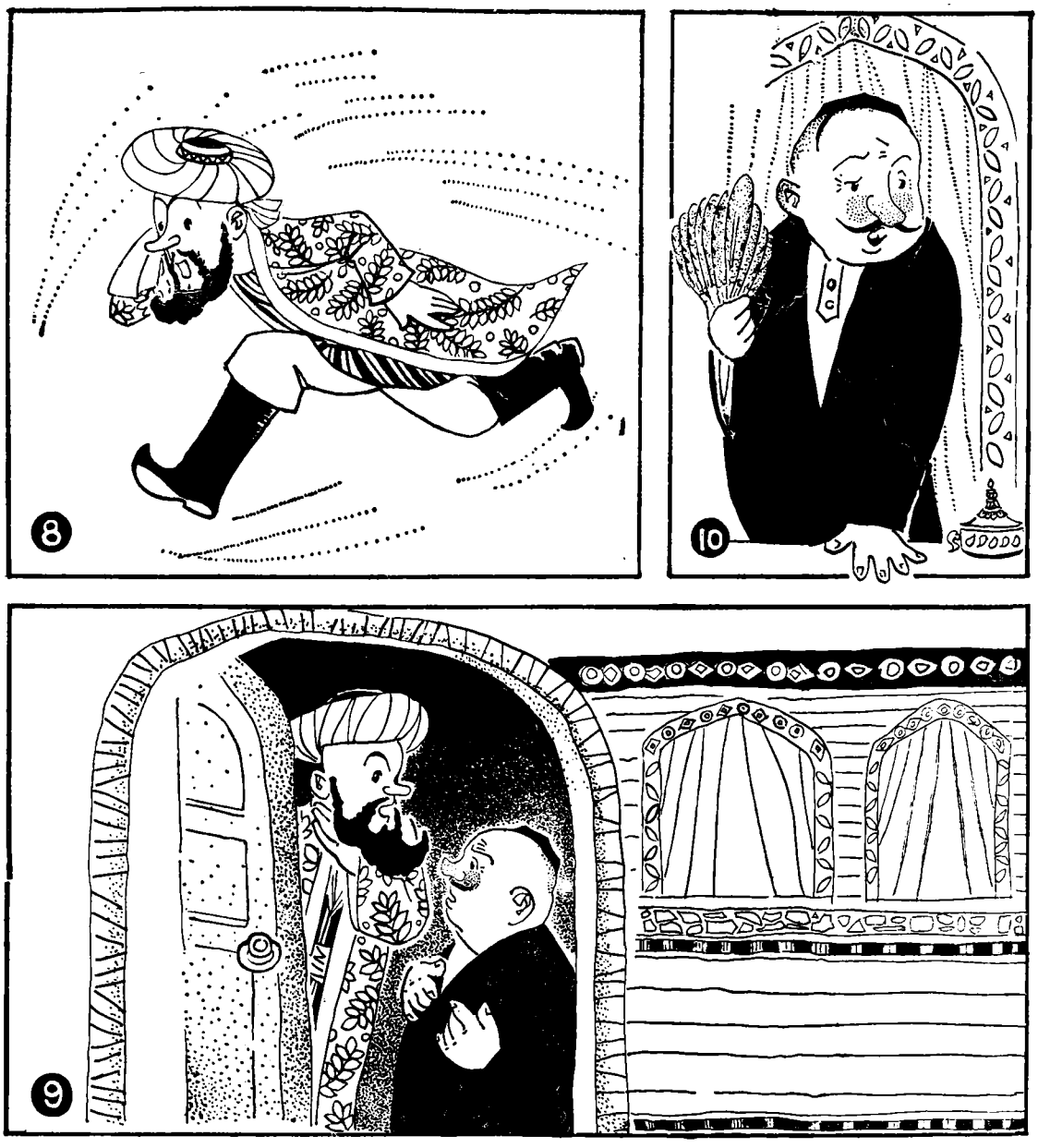
Handing the pot carefully to the lord, the Effendi said, "See what a handsome son it is!"

The lord was very happy and satisfied because, after all, he had gained something unlooked for. "Oh, yes," said he. "The young fellow looks exactly like his mother!"

Before the Effendi said goodbye, the lord said to him, "Please take good care of my big pot and let it give birth to more sons." "Yes, I surely will," the Effendi replied.







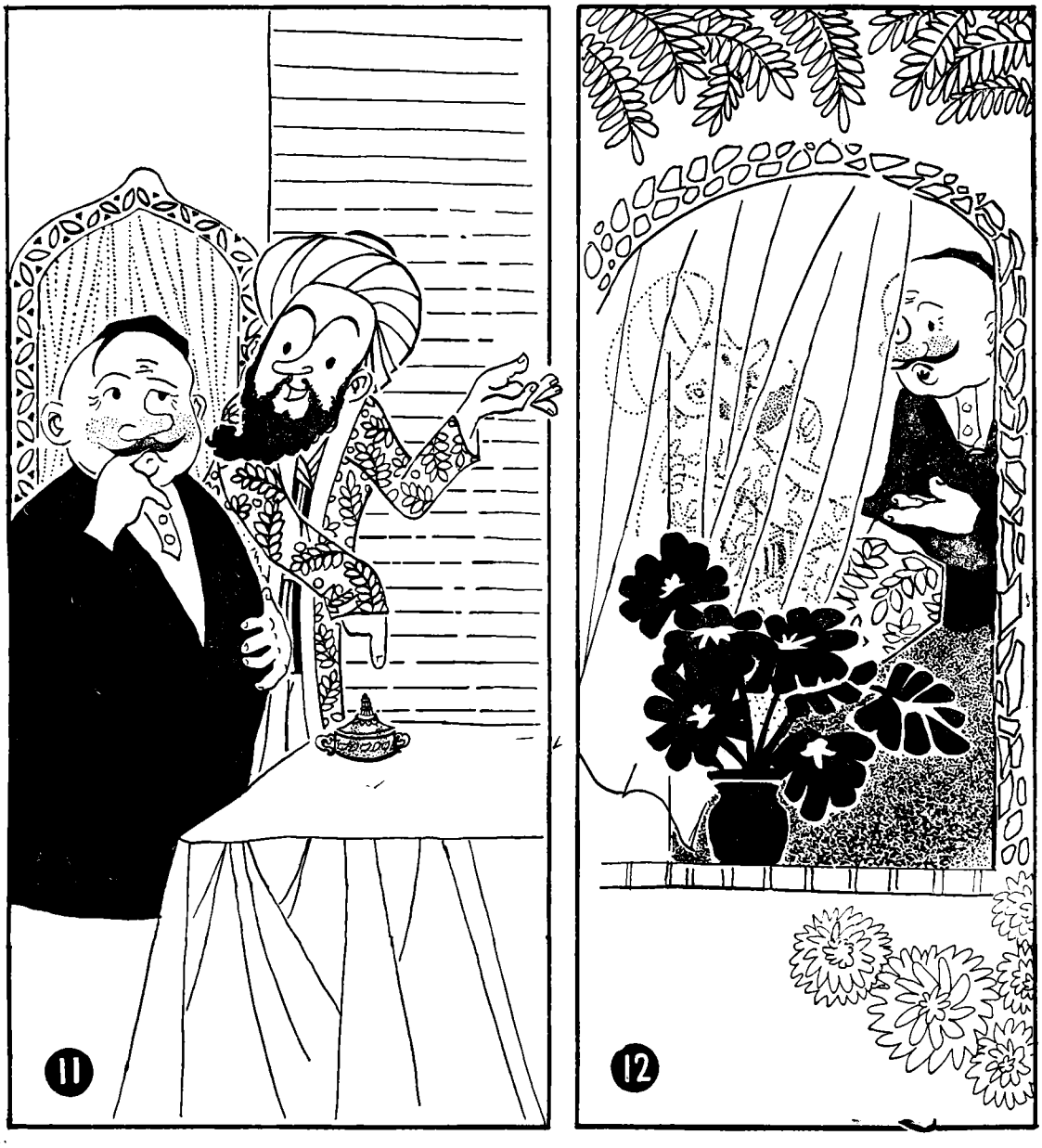
A few days later, the Effendi rushed to see the lord again. His eyes filled with tears. "Alas, my lord, bad news!" he said.

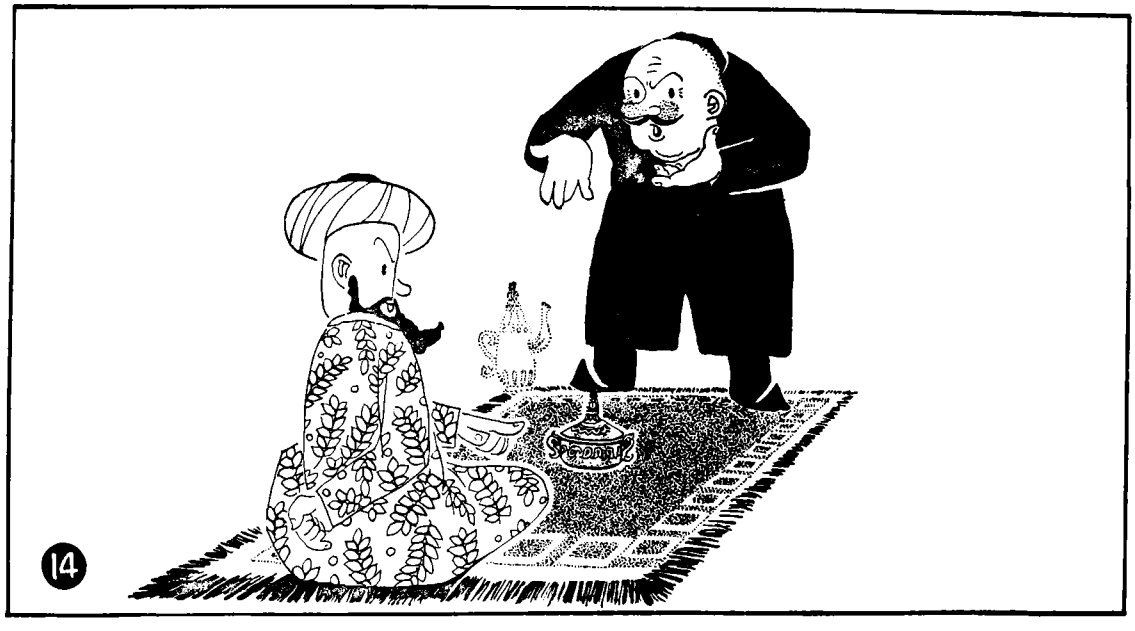
"What do you mean?" the lord asked. "Your big pot died in my house!" the Effendi replied.

"Nonsense!" cried the lord. "How can a pot die?"

"Sir," answered the Effendi, "if a pot can give birth, it can surely die." Now the lord realized why the Effendi had given him a small pot.

The lord did not give up easily. "If my big pot is dead," he said, "would you please send the body back to me?"



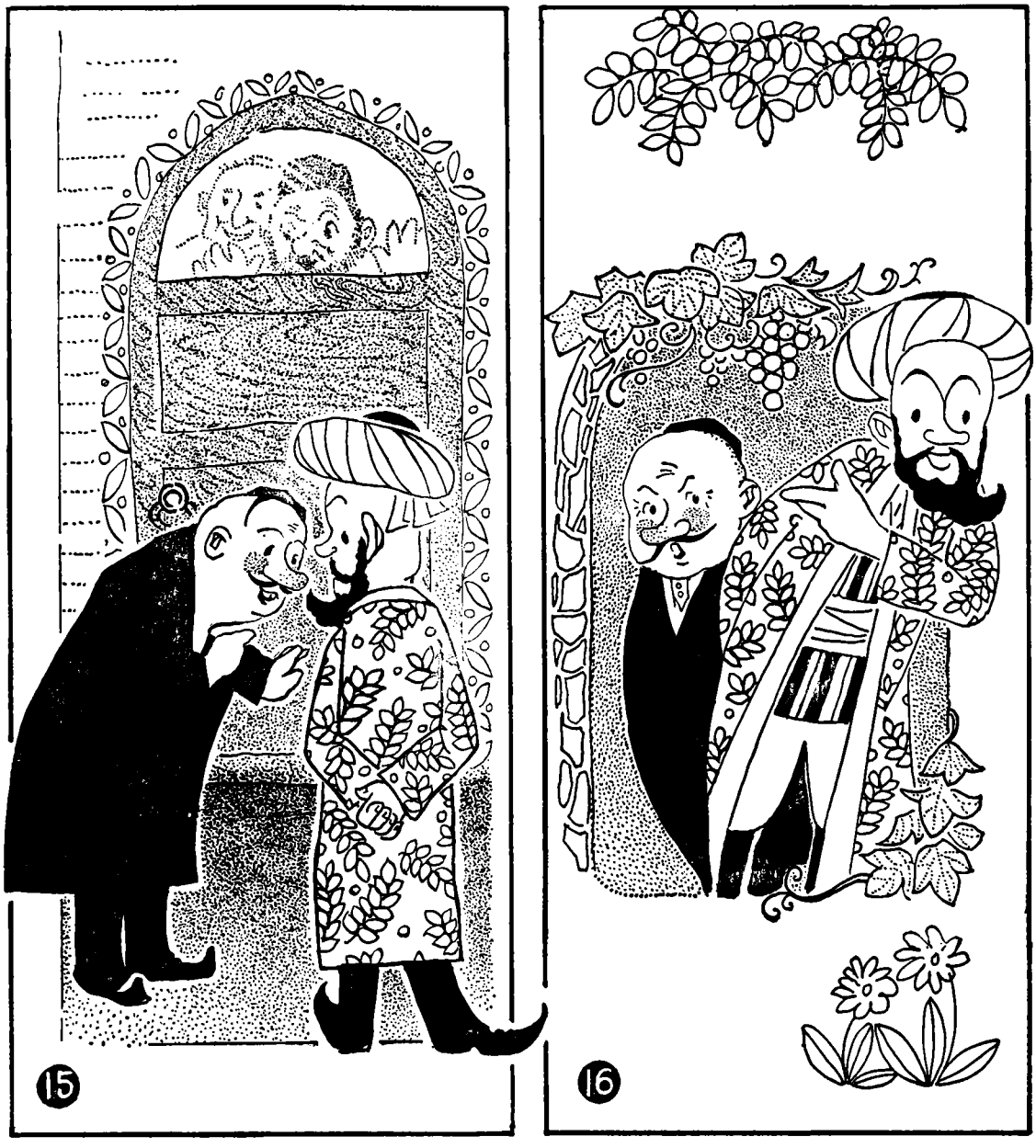


"Sorry," the Effendi replied, "I have already buried the body in the furnace."

The lord was really angry now and shouted, "Stop making jokes at my expense! You want to cheat me of my big pot, don't you?" "You got my small pot first!" the Effendi retorted. And the two of them began to quarrel and shout at each other.

Afraid of losing face in front of his neighbours, the lord gave in in the end. He told the Effendi that if he would never mention the small pot again, he could keep the big pot as a gift.

But the Effendi turned the proposal down and shouted even louder instead.



The reason was that the Effendi wanted people to know what a greedy man the lord really was.